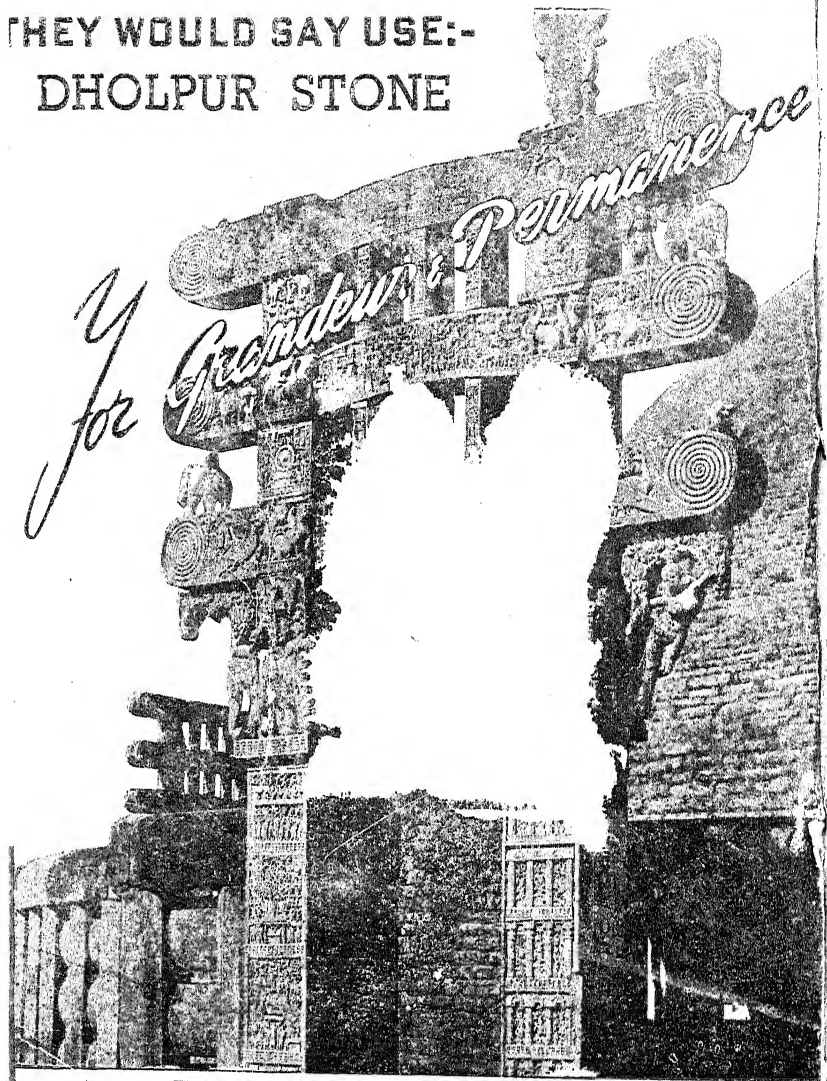


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# DID NOT COME BACK!

The Story of The Congress Medical Mission to China

by  
KHWAJA AHMAD ABBAS

*With a Foreword By*  
LIN YUTANG



SOUND MAGAZINE

(PUBLICATION DEPT.)

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***Books by K. A. ABBAS.***

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*Dedicated to the memory of*

*Dr. Dwarkanath S. Kotnis,*

*the one who did not come back !*



1st Edition May 1944.  
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## FOREWORD

Dear Mr. Abbas,

*It was a great pleasure for me to be able to read your "And One Did Not Come Back!" in manuscript. You have an easy pen and I believe you present a very correct picture of the events in China in the narrative. This book will do a great deal to let the Indian people know what their doctors did for China. It is a story that deserves to be better known.*

Yours Sincerely,

*Lin Yutang*

Calcutta,  
March 16, 1944.

## CREDENTIALS

"After going through the whole manuscript, I must admit that you are a brilliant and faithful reporter. You have not only written exactly what I did say but also what I wanted and missed to say".

Dr. B. K. BASU,

*Member of the Congress Medical Mission to China  
(in a letter to the author).*

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## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

1. Dr. M. ATAL, Leader of the Mission (Now in Jail).
2. „ M. CHOLKAR, Deputy Leader of the Mission.
3. „ D. S. KOTNIS, (Died on duty in Ko-Kung, a village in North China on 9th December, 42).
4. „ D. MUKERJI, (Recently released on parole from jail.)
5. „ B. K. BASU.

BESIDES these five, other heroes of this story are Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who conceived the idea of sending a medical mission to China as a fraternal gesture of good-will; the thousands of Indians, rich and poor, who responded to the call of the Congress and donated the annas and rupees that financed the work of the Mission; Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek, Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, Madame Sun Yat Sen, Mao Tse Tung, General Chu Teh, General Chou En-lai and other leaders of China who all welcomed the Mission and gave the members every possible help during their stay; and, above all, the common people of China who have fought the ruthless Japanese fascists for seven long years and, by their epic heroism, have earned the admiration and gratitude of lovers of freedom all over the world. It was to serve them that the Mission was sent and each member returned (and one died) with the firm conviction that to have served them in the grimmest hour of their destiny, was a unique privilege and an ennobling experience.

## "I WAS THERE"!

*I understand the large hearts of heroes,  
The courage of present times and all times,  
The disdain and calmness of martyrs.....  
All this I swallow, it tastes good, I like it well, it becomes mine,  
I am the man, I suffered, I was there.*

—WALT WHITMAN

THE story of the Indian National Congress Medical Mission to China ought to have been told by one of the members themselves. The record of such a profound and moving experience needs the authentic touch of the 'first person singular'. But a conspiracy of circumstances makes it impossible, at least for some time to come, for any of them to undertake the task. Out of the five, Dr. Kotnis, alas, is no more; Doctor Atal and Mukerji are, at the time of writing, in jail—a strange but significant post-script to this story of anti-fascist idealism; Doctor Cholkar, the grand old man of the Mission, is preoccupied with professional work. Moreover, the climatic rigours of North China had necessitated his return after only a year.

That leaves out Doctor Basu, the last to leave China, who returned to India only a few months ago, and he is busy touring the country, whipping up public interest in a projected second Medical Mission to China. But he was good enough to give me a great deal of his time for what turned out to be a marathon interview continuing for more than two weeks and it is to him and his remarkably exhaustive diary that I am indebted for the material for this book. Where necessary, I have drawn upon published material, especially Edgar Snow's books, for factual data and 'local colour' so essential for filling up the details.

It is a reporter's rather than an author's job I have undertaken. Only the words are mine; the experience belongs to the five intrepid souls who went on the Mission. But a reporter learns to relish the taste of vicarious adventure and as I listened to Doctor Basu vividly relating his experiences, I could almost imagine myself among the members of the party, getting my first taste of an air-raid in Chungking or trekking perilous miles through the enemy communication lines in northwest China !

It is a privilege, indeed, to be the one to tell this great story. But somehow I had all along felt a sense of identification with the purposes and experiences of this Mission, from the very first day when I read Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's moving appeal for volunteers and donations for this project. I was passing through Shanghai in July, 1938, when the news of the preparations for sending this Mission appeared in the press and I know how enthusiastic and excited and overwhelmingly grateful the Chinese people were to hear of this fraternal gesture on the part of the Indian people. During the four years that the Mission worked in China I followed with tremendous interest their movements and experiences through the scanty press reports that were available in India. And last year when a brief message brought the sad news of the death of Doctor Kotnis, I was so moved by the tremendous significance of this tragedy—this martyrdom—that I wrote up for "The Bombay Chronicle" an imaginary account of Doctor Kotnis' last moments. It appeared later in my book, "Let India Fight For Freedom" under the title "He Died for China", and Doctor Basu, when he read it, told me that my imaginary description approximated the facts to a remarkable extent. Finally, I might mention that the despatch of a second Indian Medical Mission to China forms the climax of my novel of contemporary India,

"Tomorrow Is Ours". I hope, therefore, that I have earned the privilege of telling this story.

It is a story, at once exciting and inspiring, the kind of story that comes along in the way of a lucky reporter once in a life-time of journalism. It is the record of five brave idealists—the oldest of them a veteran of nearly 60 and the youngest barely 26—venturing forth on a mission of mercy, imperilling their health and their very lives, dodging Japanese bombs by a hair's breadth a score of times, walking thousands of miles across trackless wastes, risking capture by the enemy, living on the barest and coarsest rations, performing delicate operations in caves and peasants' thatched huts with improvised instruments made of bamboo. It is more than that. It is the story of the suffering, enslaved heart of India that has gone out in sympathy to suffering humanity in every corner of the earth. It is the story of one definite contribution made by nationalist India to the world-wide cause of anti-fascism, a practical manifestation of the democratic sympathies of the Indian people, a small but significant token of what the Indian people might do for China if only they were free. Today much lip sympathy for China is expressed in Britain and America. But India sent a medical mission to China at a time when America was exporting oil and war material to Japan, when Britain was appeasing the war lords of Nippon by cutting off the only life-line of China—the Burma Road! Who mooted the idea of this Mission? Jawaharlal Nehru? And where is he today? In jail. And who has put him there? The British rulers of India, the self-styled friends of China! Mahatma Gandhi who blessed and enthusiastically supported the Mission is held in detention. G. P. Hutheesing, the Secretary of the China Relief Committee which collected the funds and made all arrangements for this Mission, is just out of jail on parole. Thousands of those who contributed to the fund that financed this



Mission are in jail. Two of the five doctors—Atal and Mukerji—who risked their lives for the sake of China and the anti-fascist cause are in jail. And a campaign of slanders has been kept going in the Allied press representing the imprisoned Indian nationalists—Gandhi and Nehru, Atal and Mukerji!—as friends of Fascism and enemies of democracy. Let this book answer the slanderers!

The tremendous welcome that the Congress Medical Mission received in China—from the highest officials of state as well as from the commonest people—clearly demonstrated the representative character of the Indian National Congress as the real spokesman of the Indian people. New Delhi bureaucrats and Government servants may be flown to New York and Washington and speak in the name of India at stage-managed meetings, but the five doctors sent by the Congress—by Gandhi and Nehru—were accepted and treated as ambassadors of the Indian nation. Through them the Indian people spoke to their Chinese comrades, sent them a message of goodwill and fraternal greetings, expressed their admiration for China's epic resistance, re-affirmed the ages-long friendship of the two ancient neighbours in terms of solidarity in their present struggle for freedom. As each member of the Mission returned to India he brought with him the answering echo of China's sentiment, a friendly message of thanks and good wishes for speedy realisation of India's aspirations for freedom. *And One did not come back!* Dwarkanath Kotnis, by his martyrdom, has sealed the bond of solidarity between the free peoples of China and India with the sacred, irrefutable stamp of death.

## WARRIORS WITHOUT WEAPONS

*"No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; .....any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee".*

—JOHN DONNE (*An 18th century poet*).

IN the sordid and gruesome record of modern warfare, the only redeeming feature is the humanitarian work of those 'Warriors without weapons' who risk all the hazards of the battlefields, not to kill but to save, not to inflict wounds but to heal them. This legion of mercy—doctors and nurses and stretcher-bearers—is perhaps the only evidence of man's evolution into something better than a fratricidal ape.

Carrying forward the traditions of Buddha, Christ, Mohamed and other humanitarians of all ages, the little lamp lighted by Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War still continues to shine in the encircling gloom of man's inhumanity to man. Nurse Cavell is dead but her soul goes marching on.

It was in the year 1899 that an Indian Barrister in South Africa was moved by the horrors of the Boer War to enlist in this army of humanity. His name was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. He belonged to the despised Black race which was subjected to all kinds of indignities and humiliations by the white rulers of the Dark continent. He had been fighting for the civic rights of his countrymen, matching their organized passive resistance against the armed might of the white man's Empire. He had every reason to be bitter against those who had humiliated him and his people. But he belonged to that glorious line of great souls who, through

the ages, have held aloft the banner of humanity above the poisonous clouds of hatred and violence. He organized a stretcher-bearer corps, working in the thick of battle to carry the wounded to base hospitals. It was a perilous and arduous job and more than once his life was in imminent peril. Yet this "Black" man went back and forth through the firing line, armed only with his courage and his faith, saving the lives of those very people who had insulted him, who felt themselves defiled even if an Indian travelled in the same railway compartment !

An eye-witness—a European himself—has recorded the heroism of stretcher-bearer Gandhi and his countrymen:—

"As for Mr. Gandhi, I have never known him to preach what he was unwilling to practise and he naturally, in this enterprise, took an active part.....The call to the front came on the day preceding the battle of Colenso, and the thousand Indians reached the scene of the engagement in time to render invaluable service. They entrained amidst scenes of unusual enthusiasm, reached Chieveley at the moment of need, and, *without waiting to satisfy their hunger*, marched on to Colenso, and then toiled on at their beneficent work all through the night.

"The experience must have been terrible, for the wounded were so plentiful, and visions of dying agony stamped themselves on the memories of those who saw. Everywhere, over the plain and down by the river, heaps of wounded and dead lay. Roughly speaking, one hundred and fifty were killed, and seven hundred and twenty wounded, in this engagement. It was a call for help to which the Indians eagerly responded, and worked beside their European comrades with rival devotion.

"It was during the hottest hour of this engagement, when men were falling fast on the further bank of the river, and there were few to help...in spite of the peril of death they crossed the bridge and worked from the other side ...Not a few of our soldiers owe their lives to the efficient work done by the Indians that day...although not infrequently obliged to accept insults or stand fire, they acquitted themselves with great credit, and earned the unstinted praise of the soldiers".\*

It was in the same humanitarian spirit that Mahatma Gandhi, disregarding political controversy and racial bitterness, organized an Indian Volunteer Ambulance Corps in 1914 to serve the war wounded of the Allies.

Earlier, in 1912, Turkey was in the throes of the Balkan war, threatened from all sides, torn and bleeding, fighting for her very existence. Thousands of wounded died because there were too few doctors to look after them. At that time a young England-educated doctor, Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari (who was later to become the President of the Congress) organized a medical mission of doctors and male nurses and proceeded to Turkey with medical supplies. Indian Muslims all over the country came forward with donations to finance this humanitarian project. The Mission earned the gratitude and admiration of the Turkish nation by their selfless work.

The unprovoked aggression in Abyssinia by Mussolini's black-shirt hordes stirred the entire Indian people as few events in history have ever done before. The Indian National Congress, as the mouthpiece of politically conscious India, expressed our feelings of indignation against the invader, and sympathy for the

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\* "An Indian Patriot in South Africa", by JOSEPH J. DOKE.

victim of aggression. Various schemes were mooted to send a Medical Mission to succour the helpless Ethiopians but before anything practical could be done, the first victim of Fascist ambitions had fallen, thanks to the impotency of the League of Nations and the sabotage even of the half-hearted Sanctions, by the appeaser brigade of Britain and France.

The Spanish Civil War is rightly regarded by many as the 'dress rehearsal' of the war into which Hitler was to plunge the world three years later. The Congress, under the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, India's unofficial Foreign Minister, took an unequivocal stand against the Franco insurrection and his Nazi-Fascist patrons behind the scenes. The Congress at that time was for the first time going to the polls for elections to the provincial legislatures and in the thousands of election speeches that Nehru delivered he made Spain a live and important issue for the Indian people. Sometime later, Dr. Atal, an old Congressman and relative of Nehru, went to Spain on a one-man Medical Mission to carry India's goodwill and fraternal feelings for the Spanish Republicans and to render whatever medical aid he could in attending the wounded soldiers of the International Brigade. And Nehru himself paid a flying visit to Spain to affirm nationalist India's solidarity with the Republicans.

Meanwhile, however, a grimmer drama was being played in China. The menacing shadow of Japan was creeping over the "Good Earth", and the Nanking 'incident'—really the starting point of the second World War—had developed into a wholesale invasion of the country. Europe and America watched, unconcerned and complacent, the spectacle of the mighty, industrialized, 'modern' and 'progressive' Japan overrunning the ancient, 'backward', 'uncivilized' land of China. In the perspective of the

history of their own imperialist expansion, they found nothing very objectionable or revolting in the action of bellicose Japan seeking *lebensraum*—elbow room and markets !—at the expense of defenceless and weak China. But the heart of India, softened by her own far from happy experiences of foreign rule, was profoundly touched. If sympathy with Spain or Abyssinia was based more on ideological grounds, the feelings aroused by China were more personal, more intense. China was no distant land one read of only in geography books, a mere speck on a world map; here was our next door neighbour, with whom we had lived in friendship and amity for thousands of years, with whom we had traded, exchanged religions and philosophies, ever since the days of Buddha and Asoka. Here was China, whose political and social revolution had been a source of inspiration in our own struggle for freedom—the China of Sun Yat-Sen, Chiang Kai-Shek, Mao Tse Tung and Chu Teh. And India could not possibly afford to be a passive spectator of this life-and-death struggle of the Chinese people.

But what could a nation, already in bondage, do ? A free India would have rallied to her defence if not directly by a declaration of war against Japan, then by sending substantial material help, as Soviet Russia had sent to the Republican government during the Spanish Civil War. Under the then existing circumstances, however, even anti-Japanese demonstrations were frowned upon by the authorities who were fully imbued with the Chamberlainian spirit of appeasement. The genius of Jawaharlal Nehru hit upon a plan that would enable India to make a gesture of goodwill in keeping with her humanitarian traditions and, to some little extent at least, alleviate the sufferings of the Chinese people. The Congress decided to send a Medical Mission under the leadership of Doctor Atal. An appeal was issued, a committee elected, funds and

medical supplies collected—donations from philanthropists, free medicines and equipment donated by firms of manufacturing chemists, box collections from the man in the street, even proceeds from film shows and variety entertainment programmes ! A committee of the most eminent medical practitioners including Doctors Jivraj Mehta and B. C. Roy interviewed the dozens of candidates who had volunteered to go on this mission and finally selected four, (taking into consideration their ability, experience and health), besides Dr. Atal.

Of these, Doctor Cholkar was the oldest, being nearly 60 at the time when he volunteered to undertake the hazardous trip to battle-scarred China. A veteran of the medical profession and the leading practitioner of Nagpur, he had been known to be in active sympathy with the nationalist movement, a confirmed follower of Gandhiji, and it was purely humanitarian and patriotic motives that prompted him to offer his services. The other three were younger men all below thirty. Mukerji, from Calcutta, and Dwarkanath Kotnis of Sholapur (a graduate of the Bombay University) were both unmarried, adventurous sportsmen, who saw in the Mission an opportunity to serve a noble cause as well as seek thrilling and risk-laden adventure. Bijoy Kumar Basu, who had been interested in politics of the Left and was in sympathy with the cause of China, was lucky to be selected. It happened that before he applied, one Doctor Ranen Sen of Calcutta had already been selected. But as the police suspected him of being a Communist and he had several political convictions on his record he could not secure a passport and at the last moment Basu was selected to fill the vacancy.

And thus towards the end of August, 1938, the five members of the Mission arrived in Bombay and met together for

the first time—Atal, burdened with the responsibility of making final arrangements, the wise old Cholkar gravely enthusiastic, and the three younger members bubbling with enthusiasm and that delicious dare-devilry that fills youthful hearts at the anticipation of danger. The public of Bombay gave a hearty send-off to the five doctors at a meeting held under the auspices of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee. Mrs. Naidu who presided, addressing the members of the Mission, said; "It is a dangerous task you are undertaking. You might even have to give your life, along with your Chinese comrades, in the cause of China's freedom." Four years later these prophetic words were recalled when we received the news of Doctor Kotnis' death in China. But on September 1, when the Mission sailed from Ballard Pier on board the P & O liner, S. S. Rajputana, their hearts were burdened with no dark thoughts.

The local Chinese community of Bombay gave the Mission a hearty send-off with garlands and flowers and boys singing the National Anthem of China. The Chinese Vice-Consul was there to represent his Government and his people. On behalf of the Congress, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu herself was present again to wish them *bon voyage*, along with Mr. and Mrs. Hutheesing and Editor S. A. Brelvi of *The Bombay Chronicle*.

Among the crowd that saw them off, young Kotnis could count the maximum number of personal friends—mostly medical college chums—and relatives including his aged father and mother both of whom blessed their gallant son as he touched their feet before walking up the gangway.

At midnight the ship sailed with the Mission—five 'warriors without weapons'—on board. With them they carried



*One ambulance truck,  
One ambulance car,  
Sixty cases of medicines and surgical instruments,  
One portable X-Ray apparatus, and  
the good wishes and blessings of an entire nation on whose  
behalf they were taking to China not merely medical supplies but a  
message of hope and faith and comradeship.*

## PRELUDE TO ADVENTURE.

*"I go to China. But my heart will be in India..India and China will mingle together in my mind, and I shall bring back, I hope, something of the courage and invincible optimism of the Chinese people and their capacity to pull together when peril confronts them."*

—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

*(on the eve of his departure to China in 1939).*

THE Second Class lounge of *S. S. Rajputana* was humming with excited murmurs. "Do you know, my dear.....". "Yes, five Indian doctors ..". "They are going to China, they say". "No, they are not being sent by the Government but by Gandhi's Congress", "Have you seen them yet?" "Here they come".

The passengers, with the exception of a few snobbish *burra sahibs*, were all eager to make their acquaintance and soon the five Indians, easily spotted because of their white Gandhi caps, were engaged in conversation. The "old China hands", hard-boiled whisky drinking European commercial travellers, tried to impress them with their knowledge of the Far East. The ladies wanted to interest them in the social life,—dances, games and Bridge—of the ship. But the doctors were naturally more interested in talking to the two Chinese passengers both of whom, on their part, were equally glad to make friends with the Indians on their way to serve China. The older of the two turned out to be Dr. Chao Ting Chi, Ph. D. from Columbia, a prominent economist and sociologist, editor of "Amerasia" and a member of the Institute of Pacific Relations. The younger, Mr. Wong, was an engineering student returning from England after completion of his course, full of patriotic fervour and very eager to place his newly-acquired

scientific knowledge at the service of his suffering motherland. All the five doctors had already started reading books on modern China by such authors as Edgar Snow and Agnes Smedley and welcomed this opportunity of supplementing what they had read with the personal impressions of two intelligent Chinese patriots, particularly of Dr. Chi who proved to be a veritable mine of information on every problem of his country.

Originally, the Mission had been scheduled to sail by the Italian liner, *Conte Verde*, but the Fascists even then were in active sympathy with their Japanese counterparts and refused to transport the medical supplies for free China. So, at the last moment the plans were changed and their passage was booked by the British-owned P. & O. liner that, four years later, was destined to be sunk by a German submarine.

It was the first sea-trip for the three young members of the party—Kotnis, Basu and Mukerji—and they were naturally excited by the novelty of the experience; when not otherwise engaged in study or conversation with their Chinese friends, they would just stand on deck, watching the frisky pranks of the flying fishes or the colourful pageant of the sunset clouds, as the ship steadily ploughed its way across the Arabian Sea.

At Colombo began the series of public receptions that the Mission was to get at every port, right up to Canton. The ship docked early but the Press reporters and representatives of the local Indian and Chinese communities, as also of the Colombo Merchants' Association and the Red Cross, were already there to welcome them. They were entertained at the Grand Hotel, then driven to the radio station where Dr. Atal gave a broadcast talk explaining the purpose of the Mission, and finally the day was rounded off with a public meeting at which Doctor Atal proved an accomplished orator.

Four days later when they reached Penang, the Mission was welcomed at the port by a huge gathering of Indians and Chinese. As the ship berthed, Chinese girl students sang the inspiring Chinese patriotic song, *Chilai* (Arise!) which they were later to hear wherever they went all over China. They were taken in a procession to the Chinese Association Hall where, after formal orations of welcome and thanks, they were presented with the national flags of India and China. The procession, the first of the many in which later they were to be the principal figures, was an embarrassing experience for the doctors who had never expected to be honoured as heroes or national leaders.

The same story was repeated at Singapore. As the ship steamed into the beautiful harbour, from the shore came mixed shouts of "*Vande Mataram*" and "*Chilai*" and the Indians' hearts were gladdened to see the national tricolour of India being waved in the air along with the brave flag of the Chinese Republic—appropriate symbols of Indo-Chinese unity. On landing they were garlanded by Chinese girls and then taken in a motor car procession to the Chinese Chamber of Commerce where they were welcomed on behalf of the Chinese community. Later the local Indian residents entertained their compatriots at the Victoria Memorial Hall. The members of the Mission will remember the warm reception they got at Singapore because they were so profusely garlanded and so many flowers were showered on them that their clothes had got wet and soiled and they had to return to the ship for a change of dress before keeping up a dinner appointment in the evening. It was with an overwhelming feeling of grateful remembrance that they bade good-bye to Singapore as the ship sailed away punctually at the midnight hour.

Even before reaching Hong Kong, they were given an unexpected "welcome" by the Japanese as a formidable flotilla of

warships, cruisers, aircraft carriers and submarines sailed past the *Rajputana*. But Britain was still a friendly "neutral" and the Japanese sailors who crowded on the decks of their ships to watch the P. & O. liner could not have guessed that on board were five Indians who were on their way to China to heal the wounds inflicted by the Imperial army and air force of Nippon !

Reaching Hong Kong on September 14, they left the S. S. *Rajputana* not without a wistful thought about the fourteen happy days they had spent on board, even though the thrill of anticipation of what lay ahead proved the stronger emotion. During their trip they had not only learnt a lot about wartime China from books and from the two Chinese friends they had made on board, but also they had an opportunity to get to know each other better. In these two weeks, the five members of the Mission had knocked off many of their edges and angularities and adjusted themselves to each other's temperament and taste. They were men of different types—Atal, a seasoned, much-travelled cosmopolitan of pronounced leftist sympathies; Cholkar, the grand old man of the medical profession in Nagpur, a staunch Gandhiite, right wing Congressman and a vegetarian; the adventurous Bengali bachelor, Mukerji; the young, smart and enthusiastic Kotnis from Maharashtra who had already acquired a smattering of the Chinese language; and Basu the politically-minded young doctor from Dacca. Atal who had been appointed Leader of the Mission impressed his colleagues as a man of infinite charm and understanding, a brilliant conversationalist with a fund of numerous anecdotes collected in a lifetime devoted to medicine and radical politics. His adventurous experiences as a doctor in wartime Spain were eagerly listened to by his colleagues as they provided a foretaste of what lay ahead of them in China.

At the Kowloon jetty of Hong Kong, the Mission was received by Chinese Government officials and Indian residents, most prominent of them being the editor, publisher and political worker, Mr. Amritlal Seth. A round of entertainments started including a lunch with Mr. Seth and other Indians, a tea party given by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce at which, among others, were present, the Finance Minister, Mr. T. V. Soong, Dr. Wu, the head of the Chinese Red Cross, and two New Zealand doctors recently returned from the front.

All this feasting and toasting was hardly what they had bargained for. Having set out only with a view to serve the wounded patriots of China, and knowing the grim conditions of life in the interior of the country, it was quite embarrassing for them to be treated everywhere in this lavish manner. On the other hand, they were deeply touched by the sincerity and eagerness with which both the Chinese and Indians wanted to express their appreciation of the task that the Mission had undertaken. After all, it was not the individuals—Atal, Cholkar, Mukerji, Basu and Kotnis—who were being honoured but the organisation they represented—the Indian National Congress! They were deputising there for Gandhi and Tagore and Nehru, they were the ambassadors of goodwill from the people of India themselves! It was the sentiment of Indo-Chinese unity and brotherhood that was being reaffirmed in the toasts that were drunk to their health, in the speeches that were delivered to welcome them. In his replies to all the addresses of welcome, Doctor Atal never failed to emphasise this character of the Mission and to declare how the ancient bonds of friendship between the two peoples had been strengthened by the struggle for freedom in which both were engaged—one against Japanese militarism, the other against British imperialism.

Hong Kong, though geographically and historically a part of China proper, was still a British possession in September, 1938—a reminder of the old story of Imperialism in the Far East,

checked but not altogether overthrown by the establishment of the Chinese republic. And yet even in the otherwise peaceful atmosphere of Hong Kong, with its cosmopolitan population and the general air of cynical commercialism, the Indian doctors could not help feeling the hot breath of Mars on their cheeks. The Hong Kong—Canton railway had been repeatedly bombed, the city was crowded with hundreds of thousands of pitiable refugees from the interior and among the Chinese who formed the bulk of the population, there was evident a grim tension and an unspoken bitterness against the enemy who continued to live in the city, a potential fifth column masquerading as dentists and doctors, under the protection of the Union Jack! Early in the morning, from the hotel window the Indian doctors could see Chinese civilians, including children also, parading and getting military training. Asked why even children were being drilled with rifles, an old Chinese gentleman grimly answered, "We are preparing for a long war".

On September 17, the Mission left for Canton by S. S. *Fatskun*. Slowly the small river steamer chugged its way up the delta of the Pearl river and from its deck, the visitors from India had their first look at the land. They were now in the territory of the republic of China. As far as the eye could travel the fertile river valley lay in the lap of softly-curved hills. This then was the "Good Earth" that for thousands of years the simple, peace-loving Chinese people had watered with their sweat and their blood. Out of this earth they had raised their crops and their children, developed a kindly, mellow philosophy of life and an enduring civilisation. But to-day a shadow lay over the land, an evil shadow that brought in its wake death and destruction. It was with a sense of fateful symbolism that the five Indian friends of China raised their eyes from the Good Earth to the sky. Three Japanese bombers, their red markings clearly visible, swooped low like vicious vultures, hovered for a second over the steamer, then flew away into the distance.

## NINE-ONE-EIGHT.

*Men of China, proud and free,  
Let the stars your garment be.  
As you plough uneven soil,  
Reap the harvest of your toil.  
Fight for your land  
Freedom's at hand.  
Mankind must reach  
The World's Great Peace.  
Heaven blue, Sun of white,  
Field of red, standard bright.*

—CHINESE NATIONAL FLAG SONG.

CANTON, once a flourishing centre of trade and industry and the leading city of South China, turned out to be a battle-scarred city. Whole buildings either reduced to piles of rubble or sliced in half and left standing perilously, walls riddled with bullet holes, schools and hospitals in ruins—grim but eloquent reminders of Japan's civilising mission in East Asia! Necessity, however, is the mother of invention and devices for self-preservation have always tried to keep pace with the evolution of the techniques of destruction. Without adequate defence against the Japanese bombers and raiders or even sufficient number of air-raid shelters, the local residents had built bamboo roofs over their houses to break the fall of crashing bombs—a pathetically primitive yet not altogether ineffective safety device. If a few houses could still be seen standing intact it was due to these flimsy-looking and almost comical bamboo roofs. The tide of war in South-East China was then rapidly turning against the patriotic forces and already there were rumours that soon Canton would have to be evacuated, perhaps altogether abandoned.



The day following the Indian doctors' arrival—September 18—was the seventh anniversary of the Mukden incident of 1931 which was the starting point not only of Japanese aggression in China but actually of the Second World War ! It is observed every year in China as a day of national humiliation but it is simply known as *Chiu-I-Pa* ('Nine-One-Eight' or Ninth Month, Eighteenth Day Nine-One-Eight ! Nine-One-Eight !! Like a branded oath, the date is made to burn into the patriotic consciousness, the pain at the humiliation of this as well as other tragic anniversaries deliberately kept alive to prepare the nation for revenge upon the enemy.

"Nine-One-Eight", 1938, dawned upon Canton appropriately enough with an air-raid alarm, the first of the hundreds that the Indian doctors were to hear during their stay in China. Later they would become as cynically indifferent to such alarms as the Chinese themselves but on that day as they rushed out of their beds they were frankly rattled. But in the streets outside there was no panic, no rush, people seemed to go about their early morning errands with unhurried steps. There had been so many air-raids on Canton that an alarm no longer held any terrors for the people in the city. This one proved to be only a precautionary warning. Enemy planes had been sighted in the distance but none appeared over the city and soon the All-clear was sounded.

Putting on their military doctors' uniforms—regulation Khaki except for the distinctive white Gandhi caps—the doctors went round the city in an ambulance car that had grim-looking bullet holes where it had been strafed by a low-flying Japanese plane despite the big red crosses painted on the top as well as the sides. The first place they visited was the "Seventy-two Heroes Memorial" raised to the memory of the revolutionaries who had conspired to kill the Governor of Kwangtung province in the reign of the

Manchu emperor. There are seventy-two stones, one to represent each martyr. The members of the Mission placed wreaths on behalf of the Indian National Congress on these stones as also on the tomb of the martyrs of the 19th Route Army killed in Shanghai fighting against the Japanese in 1932. Finally they went to place a wreath on the portrait of the father of the Chinese republic in the artistically decorated Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall. They found the portrait slightly damaged by a bomb, but as they stood before it in silent and reverent homage, they knew that the Japanese would never be able to damage the image of Sun Yat-Sen that was enshrined in the heart of every Chinese patriot.

In the evening a big procession paraded through the city to commemorate the "Nine-One-Eight" anniversary. Meetings were held at every street corner, addressed by impassioned orators, mostly young boys and girls, who spoke of the humiliation that the nation had suffered on that day seven years ago and of the determined resolve of the people of China not to rest until they had avenged all the wrongs inflicted by the enemy. The enthusiasm with which the remarks of the street-corner orators were greeted by the crowds bore testimony to the spirit of resistance kindled in the heart of every Chinese, the spirit that was the real bulwark against the rushing tide of Japanese militarism. At every street crossing, streams of more and more people joined the main procession which, by the time it terminated, had swelled to over two hundred thousands. Important part of the procession were a number of wagons which bore on their sides enormous poster cartoons depicting various inspiring phases of national resistance against Japan. As the twilight hour dissolved into the night, torches suddenly appeared, held aloft by boys and girls in uniform—flaming beacons of hope and undying patriotism! "*Chiliu*" and other patriotic songs rose from a thousand throats and went up into the

sky, a defiant challenge to the enemy and an inspiring call to the nation. *Chilai ! Chilai !!* Arise ! Arise !! Arise, you sturdy sons of the Good Earth ! Arise, you children of Confucius ! Arise, you workers and toilers, students and scholars, poets and artists, women and children of China ! Your country is in peril. An evil enemy has usurped your land, destroyed your buildings, burnt your crops, dishonoured your mothers and sisters and daughters. Arise, arise with all the fury of a people's holy indignation, arise to stamp out the invader who menaces your country's freedom. Arise, awaken and avenge !

It was a soul-stirring emotional experience and long after the procession had terminated, the empty city streets held the silent echoes of the songs and the slogans. And the five visitors from India had their first day in China unforgettably stamped with the memory of "Nine-One-Eight", the day when a nation remembered her humiliation and swore to redeem her honour.

## MADAME SUN AND THE CHOPSTICKS.

*"If Madame Chiang is the glittering diamond in the Soong dynastic crown, then Madame Sun is other things: a hidden flower; a beautifully luminous bit of porcelain; a source of spiritual continuity and power; a shadow with flame behind it".*

—JOHN GUNTHER in *"Inside Asia"*.

**S**MALL, graceful, looking very beautiful in a simple black gown, speaking perfect English with a slightly American accent, Soong Ching-Ling, widow of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, came on board to welcome the Indian doctors at the Canton harbour. This was an unexpected honour and a pleasure, besides. For Madame Sun Yat-Sen, both as the ideological legatee of her husband-leader and in her own rights, is one of the greatest and most popular personalities of modern China. The second of the famous three Soong sisters, younger than Madame Kung, the wife of the Prime Minister, and older than Madame Chiang, she commands the respect as well as affection of her people, particularly of the leftist youth and the Communists. She had consistently taken a more radical line in political and economic matters than either of her sisters or her brother-in-law, the Generallissimo. More politically informed and dynamic in expression of her political views than her world-famous younger sister, she personally occupies a very important place in the Government of the country, being a member of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang. After years of personal and ideological differences, her re-union with the other members of the family is symbolic of the present United Front of the Right and the Left in China.

As she stepped aboard the steamer, she was accompanied by Madame Liao Chung Kai, a woman doctor, the Secretary of the Canton Trade Union, and other officials and non-officials. But

she easily stood out amongst them and inspite of her frail appearance, vitality and strength of character shone in her face. As they were introduced to her, it was difficult for the Indian doctors to believe that the charming and young-looking lady enthusiastically shaking hands with them is really fifty years old, a hardened revolutionary and the life-companion of the maker of the Chinese republic. Later when they saw her leading the "Nine-One-Eight" procession, she looked like a symbol of unconquerable China.

During their one-week stay in Canton the members of the Mission were treated with overwhelming consideration and hospitality. They were taken in a procession from the docks to their residence, provided with a Guard of Honour by girl scouts, and invited to luncheons and dinners at which the most eminent Chinese—Generals and Governors, politicians, Kuomintang officials doctors and intellectuals—were present and toasts were drunk to the Indian National Congress and speeches delivered pledging China's moral support to the cause of Indian independence. But the most memorable dinner they had was the one given in their honour by the Mayor of Canton. Among those present was Charlotte Haldane, the well-known British woman war correspondent. Madame Sun Yat-Sen, by virtue of her position presided at the dinner table and talked to Doctor Atal and the other Indian doctors about India and, particularly, about Jawaharlal Nehru whom she had met in Moscow and learnt to admire ever since then\*. She revealed an amazing grasp of the

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\* A year later, summing up his impressions of China, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote:—"One regret filled me. I had not been able to meet Madame Sun Yat-Sen, that gracious lady who has been the flame and soul of the Chinese Revolution ever since the Father of the Revolution passed away. I had met her twelve years previously for a brief half-hour, and ever since I had cherished the wish to meet her again, for she is of the elect of the world. Unfortunately she was in Hong-Kong and I could not journey thither."

—(*"China, Spain and the War,"* page 25)

political situation in India and frankly expressed her whole-hearted sympathy for the anti-Imperialist struggle of the Indian people. Also she proved to be a woman of great tact and kindness. The Indians, she noticed, were proving absolutely incapable of manipulating their chopsticks and in trying to conform to the style of eating of their hosts they were not only providing a comical spectacle but were also likely to leave the table without having any food. Like Queen Victoria who is reputed to have saved an Indian prince from embarrassment by drinking her soup, as he was doing straight from the plate, Madame Sun came to the rescue of her guests.

She put aside her chopsticks, dipped her dainty fingers in the bowl in front of her and said aloud, "God gave us hands to eat. Let's use them". The whole company followed her example.

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The seven days in Canton were spent in hectic activity. Apart from the receptions and public meetings, the doctors were professionally interested in visiting the two big hospitals of the city. The Military Hospital turned out to be well-equipped and up-to-date but the Doctor Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hospital for civilians was overcrowded with air-raid casualties. Here they had an opportunity to see the various improvised medical instruments manufactured in China to meet the urgent demand. Also the sight of the few Chinese doctors feverishly working night and day to cope with the thousands of wounded men, women and children lying in the wards, the verandahs, even in the courtyards, gave the Indians some idea of the desperate urgency with which China needed doctors and medical supplies. "We are only five", they thought, "and our supplies will last us for hardly a year. What China needs are five thousand more doctors and millions of

cases of medicines and surgical appliances." Even then, it was some comfort to think that soon they would be at work, and that their services and the supplies they had brought with them would be a timely contribution to China's gallant war effort.

In the Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hospital, they saw grim reminders of what they, even in their capacity of doctors working under the internationally recognised sanctuary of the Red Cross should expect from the Japanese. Part of the hospital was damaged by bombs and since then dug-outs had been made in the compound to which the patients were carried as soon as an air-raid siren was sounded.

Indeed, before they left Canton they were to experience a full-fledged air-raid. A mass meeting which was being held to give them a civic farewell had to be dispersed owing to an air-raid alarm. For the first time they were hustled into an underground shelter from where they could hear a rolling sound like thunder as bombs fell in some other parts of the city. They confessed to each other later that at first they were quite nervous though the calm composure of their Chinese friends in the shelter was reassuring and before they left the shelter they had mastered their initial fright.

There were lighter interludes, too. Their efforts to learn the Chinese language had not yet borne fruit and they had amusing adventures when they ventured forth in the city on their own without an interpreter. For instance, once three of them—Kotnis, Basu and Mukerji—decided to go to a Chinese restaurant for dinner. The girl who served them did not know English and even Kotnis' "advanced" knowledge of Chinese was not yet equal to the word "Chicken" in the language of the Mandarins. So, Art was summoned to the aid of the three hungry doctors and

they jointly executed on the back of the menu card what they regarded as a most realistic and life-like drawing of a rooster. The waitress smiled a smile of understanding and returned a few minutes later proudly displaying on the plate—a grilled frog !

At 4 a. m. on September 23, while Canton peacefully slumbered, a convoy of seven Red Cross ambulance trucks left the city and, keeping a distance of 200 meters between each vehicle for fear of bombing, slowly drove through the awakening countryside. The Indian Medical Mission was on its way to Changsha, the capital of the Hunan province, where the five doctors expected to be put to work immediately.



## SPIRIT OF CHINA.

*"The "unchanging" Chinese are going to win the war because after all they are changing and in a progressive, creative direction".*

—OWEN LATTIMORE.

CANTON to Changsha—eight hundred miles—flat plains, uphill, downhill, dangerous curves, hair-pin bends, upturned trucks lying by the road-side or fallen down the steep inclines, villages and towns still smoking after recent air-raids, bombed bridges; pine-covered hills, terraced paddy fields cut out of the slopes, sparkling mountain streams of ice-cold water, the much-bombed railway line now running close to the road, now rushing away through a tunnel to the other side of the hill, driving on and on by day and by night, the tireless drivers glued to their wheels, their eyes on the road ahead, as the trucks go uphill, downhill, never less than 200 meters apart for any moment a Japanese bomber might appear in the sky and a massed group of vehicles would be an ideal target.

Besides the five Indians, others in the convoy included Doctor Harrison from Canada and Doctor Wang, both of Red Cross, Mr. Wu, an official of the Transport Ministry and Miss Rubens, a typical enterprising American journalist. An assorted, cosmopolitan crowd, brought together by their common interest in China's welfare.

Changsha, which they reached on September 25, is a provincial capital about the size of Nagpur, an old type of city with narrow, winding lanes reminiscent of Benares. The streets are roofed as a protection against cold and the buildings all bore tell-tale marks of bombing.

There was no time, however, for the doctors to look round at the architectural peculiarities of the city. As soon as they were

lodged in a Middle School building now turned into a military training centre, they were thrown into the real work for which they had come to China. The feasting and toasting phase seemed to be over and much as they had appreciated the profuse hospitality accorded to them everywhere, they were right glad to get down to business.

They learnt that they would have to work directly under Doctor Robert Lim, Director of Medical Relief Commission, Chinese National Red Cross, and found him to be one of the finest and most lovable personalities in China with whom it would be a pleasure and a privilege to work. Himself an eminent physiologist, graduated with honours from Edinburgh, Dr. Lim was a professor at the Peiping Union Medical College before the war. Thin and small, intellectual-looking even in his army uniform, he speaks perfect English and holds very progressive ideas. He is the man to whose patriotic zeal and professional acumen, wartime China owes the entire organisation of Medical relief in circumstances that would have discouraged and unnerved anyone with less determination. Stories of his personal courage and self-sacrificing heroism have become legends in China and one of the characters in Lin Yutang's novel, "A Leaf In The Storm", describes how he saved hundreds at the risk of his own life, during the evacuation of Nanking. Incidentally, in 1942, he came to India, marching along with the gallant Chinese Expeditionary Force, after the Burma debacle.

When the war with Japan broke out, of the 10,000 registered doctors in the country only 2,000 were qualified men and out of these just a thousand or so were in the army—one doctor for 2,000 soldiers! Dr. Lim mobilised all his students and ex-students and organised the Medical Relief Commission which is a sort of

auxiliary to the Red Cross organisation and works in conjunction with the army wherever necessary in base hospitals or in front-line mobile ambulance units.

The Medical Relief Commission work is divided into five departments: (1) Curative (2) Nursing (3) Ambulance (4) Preventive (5) X-Ray. In turn, each department has the available personnel divided into so many units. Each Curative Unit has five doctors, nurses, dressers, orderlies, cook and Quarter Master. The Indian Mission, with the addition of the necessary staff including English-knowing male nurses, became the "No. 15 Curative (Indian) Unit" and, before actual work was assigned to them, they were asked to learn about the Medical Relief Commission organisation by going round the hospitals and attending Dr. Lim's classes when he lectured to the new doctors.

In the Military Hospital, the Indians were impressed by the efficiency and conscientiousness of the young Chinese doctors a few of whom were coping with a colossal number of patients. In the Red Cross Transport Department were trucks and cars most of them bearing the names of organisations of patriotic overseas Chinese—in England, America, Phillipines, Java and Sumatra—who had donated them. A few had been sent by non-Chinese sympathisers. To these would be added the car and truck sent by the Indian National Congress.

Driving out of the city one day, the doctors heard the air-raid siren and, abandoning the car, had to jump into the trenches. The planes, however, had come over the city merely for reconnaissance and no bombs fell. But while under cover, they were surprised to see some evidently old trenches just near the freshly-dug new ones. These, they were told, dated back to the "Red

Army" days of 1930 when a social revolution in Changsha was put down with the help of British and American gunboats which had shelled the city from the river.

Inspiring in the extreme, however, was the Memorial Service to honour an ambulance worker who had been killed at the front while picking a wounded soldier. He had received a shrapnel wound in the brain and died soon after he had carried the wounded soldier back to safety. The father of the boy, who was only seventeen at the time of his death, was present at the meeting and in an amazingly calm voice this simple working class patriot addressed the audience, declaring that if he had any more sons he would cheerfully dedicate their lives to the nation. Both the martyrdom of the son and the noble fortitude of his father were symbolic of that determined spirit of resistance that has saved China so far from utter defeat and, indeed, which ensures her final victory.

The same spirit could be seen at work in a group of young boys and girls (their ages ranging from 7 to 15) who came to interview the Indian doctors with the help of an interpreter. They had all just returned from a 6,000 mile tour of the interior of the country, walking from village to village,—often dodging the enemy lines—propagating the patriotic cause through songs, speeches and plays. The leader, a boy of hardly 14, made a speech thanking the Indian people for sending the Medical Mission and then they all eagerly subjected the doctors to a volley of questions about India. These young lively and intelligent children, who had left their homes and parents for the sake of their country, were, indeed, representatives of the new China.

## HIGHWAY OF HELL.

*"The terror was not that of battle, of shells and tanks and guns and grenades. It was not even the terror of bombs from the air.....It was not the terror of death, of combat, of the clang of metal against metal. Men had killed men in battles since civilisation began..... But not until now, since God created man, had human eyes seen laughing soldiers throw a baby into the air, catch it expertly on the point of a sharp bayonet and call it sport... No, the terror was that of man, what men of one race could do to fellow men of another race."*

—LIN YUTANG in *"A Leaf In The Storm"*.

CHANGSHA was but an interlude on the way to Hankow, then the war-time capital of China. On September 29, 1938, the Indian Medical Mission—or, rather the "Number 15 Curative (Indian) Unit"—, accompanied by Mr. William Wu, head of the Transport Department of the Red Cross, started at dawn in three trucks. This four hundred miles trip to the north-east brought them face to face with the hideous, horrifying reality of war.

Crossing the river by ferry, at noon time they reached the city of Chung Yen. Even from a distance, smoke could be seen rising from the burnt-down buildings. For the last three days there had been almost incessant air-raids and only half an hour ago there had been a particularly severe one. Practically every house had been razed to the ground and many, struck by the incendiaries, were in flames. On every side dead bodies lay strewn about in a gruesome state of decomposition. At least two hundred had died and a hundred wounded in the latest air-raid alone. Not many people were left in the city and hungry men and dogs, both reduced to skeletons, could be seen dragging their bodies about, like grim shadows of death. A few Chinese Red Cross

workers were already there—one Curative and one Nursing unit trying their best to care for the wounded but they were hopelessly inadequate to meet the situation. And yet it was but one town out of hundreds of towns in similar plight. The tragedy of Chung Yen was the tragedy of China.

Towards the end of September, 1938, the war in South China was going badly for the patriotic forces. The juggernaut of the Japanese armed might, after overrunning the coastal cities had been creeping along inwards and both Canton and Hankow were under siege constantly. The Canton-Changsha-Hankow railway was constantly bombed from the air, jeopardising the already tangled communications. And in the entire sector there were few towns of any mentionable size and importance that had not been "blitzed" like Chung Yen. Backed by almost overwhelming mechanized equipment, the Japanese forces were steadily pushing along the Yangtze and at several places the Chinese armies had had to retreat after suffering overwhelming casualties.

By a mistake on the part of their truck driver who turned east instead of north at a cross-roads the Indian doctors had a view of this tragic retreat and almost blundered right up to the front-lines.

It was a veritable Highway of Hell. Along the road came streams of pitifully wounded, disabled, retreating soldiers, limping their way to base hospitals. They were covered with dust, grey with fatigue, pale from loss of blood. They had bandaged their wounds with their torn uniforms, many of them evidently had not eaten for days and were trying to chew paddy torn from the fields, some were too weak or too ill even to walk and lay down by the roadside—perhaps to die ! Hunger and pain had

driven at least some of them crazy and they stopped the ambulance truck at the point of gun demanding food and transportation. But when they knew the identity of the occupants they were apologetic and remorseful, almost reduced to tears. It was a pitiable sight and one of the most heart-rending experiences the Indian Mission had in China. Later on they were to see men and women blown to bits by bombs across the street from where they sat, they would see fierce battles as well as guerilla encounters, they would treat the fresh, gushing wounds of soldiers only half a mile behind the firing lines, some of them would experience the perilous adventure of crossing the enemy lines within easy firing range of the Japanese sentries' rifles. And yet there was something so infinitely tragic and hopeless about this seemingly unending stream of broken and bleeding humanity—this Highway of Hell—that would for ever remain imprinted on their minds as the most terrible thing they saw in China.

Even a party of doctors with the best of intentions and humanitarian impulses, can do little in the face of such large-scale misery and suffering. Yet they did stop every now and then to render first aid to some of the straggling soldiers but their equipment was in the other trucks and, after realising their mistake about the direction, they turned back from a point where they could hear the booming of guns at the front. For hours they drove in the dark, all along hearing the rattle and noise of army movement up and down the road. They were now definitely in the active war zone.

As they ferried their convoy of cars across a shallow river in pitch darkness, on reaching the other bank they could feel the large-scale movement of troops because of the muffled clanking of artillery trains. Basu who could not make out his truck in the

dark flashed an electric torch and at once received a sharp rebuke from the hitherto polite commander of the convoy: "Will you shut that, you fool?" It was only then that they realized that they were in such close proximity to the enemy and what Basu had unwittingly done might have invited a salvo of artillery and cost a thousand lives!

At 10-30 p. m. the first of their trucks reached Wuchang and crossing the river Yangtse Kiang, drove into Hankow. These two twin cities (like Hungary's Buda-Pest) together with the industrial suburb of Hanyang are known as Wu Han, at the junction of the Han and the Yangtze rivers.

The modern and almost gay atmosphere in Hankow—fine hotels and shops filled with all the luxuries and fancy goods—came as a startling contrast to what they had seen on the 'Highway of Hell' only a few miles from the city. There was usual hustle and noise of a modern metropolis, the streets were crowded, and one seldom got the impression of a city under siege, much less a doomed city which would soon have to be evacuated. People were already talking in terms of "When Hankow is evacuated" instead of "If Hankow is evacuated." And yet life went on at its normal pace!

Still, if one looked around, there were sufficient signs of the proximity of war. Quite a few buildings were in ruins, many bore the scars of air-raids. Mingled with the smart and well-dressed crowd of officials, merchants and students was a mass of refugees in rags, thousands of whom had walked hundreds of miles to reach Honkow—"the greatest migration of people in all history .....pouring from the coast into the inland, forsaking their homes and the cities, trudging over mountains and crossing rivers, fleeing from mass slaughter in an incomprehensible invasion by an incom-



prehensible enemy."\* They too had walked along the 'Highway of Hell' and what they had seen and suffered was written in the deep lines of misery on their faces.

The 64th Base Hospital which they visited on the day following their arrival furnished further evidence of the tragedy that lay behind the smiling facade of Hankow. Situated in the part of the city that before the war was the Japanese Concession, it was originally a Japanese hospital for 200 beds. Now it had been converted into a Military hospital and accommodated 1,500 seriously wounded cases, all lying on straw mats on the floor. The second hospital in another part of the city had 2,500 cases and was, if possible, even more over-crowded. There were not enough doctors and not enough medical supplies. The Indian Unit seemed to have arrived at a most critical moment and the doctors as well as the supplies they had with them were welcomed with touching expressions of gratitude.

On October 1, the Indian Unit started work. It was divided into two teams — to work in the two different hospitals, Cholkar and Basu in one and Kotnis and Mukerji in the other with Atal working as Physician, rushing from the one to the other.

For seventeen days they worked in Hankow, working from dawn till dusk and often far into the night, in co-operation with the Chinese doctors and the Java Ambulance Unit who were volunteers from abroad like themselves.

In all their collective medical experience they had never seen such serious cases — hands and legs amputated, faces blown off by dum-dum bullets, pieces of shrapnel in lungs and abdomens — nor had they witnessed such amazing capacity for

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\* "Leaf In The Storm", a novel of War-Swept China, by Lin Yutang.

silent suffering. And the tender look of gratitude that they saw in the eyes of their patients after a successful operation or administration of some soothing sedative was more than sufficient compensation for all the inconvenience, the long hours and the sleepless nights.

During their stay in Hankow, there were several air-raids but they were already becoming used to them and took them stoically like their Chinese colleagues. The news from the front was none too good, the Japanese were making a determined drive towards the capital. The younger members of the Mission were impatient to go to the front and see the fighting at close range. The authorities consented to send them with a party of Chinese and foreign journalists for whom a trip to the battle zone had been arranged. But somehow the news leaked out and got printed in papers after which the visit was cancelled, much to the disappointment of the doctors as well as the journalists. A philosophical old Chinese consoled them by saying: "Do not worry if you cannot go to the front. The front will soon come to you."

And, indeed, the front was steadily creeping towards them, although life in the city went on as usual and the Harvest Festival was celebrated with all the traditional gaiety—crackers and fireworks! Two days later came the "Double-Tenth Day" (October 10) or "National Revolution Day", the anniversary of the fall of the Manchu dynasty in 1911. A holiday atmosphere prevailed, there were flags everywhere, the national song was being sung and every face was happy. Thousands gathered to witness the parade when Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek inspected the army. There was good news even from the front. Two Japanese divisions had been almost annihilated in the Kiangsi sector.

Yet the decision to evacuate the city had already been taken and the very next day the 87th Hospital was evacuated to Ichang further west into the interior. The Japanese were reported to be coming nearer every day. The doctors received telephonic instructions from Changsha to get ready to leave at short notice. As they were packing, there was an air alarm and, hearing that the "Russian Bees", as the Soviet fighter planes were known locally, were going up to intercept the Jap bombers, they went out in the street to watch the dog-fight. The local people were very proud of the "Bees", which had brought down many a Jap plane, and spoke enthusiastically of the gallant work of the Soviet airmen. The intruders were soon chased away but the incident came as a significant reminder of the substantial material help that the Soviet Union, of all the foreign powers, was then giving to China.

On October 14, they were packed up and ready. The civilian population had already begun to evacuate. But the departure of their steamer was postponed, so the doctors were asked to examine the 200 volunteers for the Medical training scheme which took two days while the Jap planes paid repeated visits to the city and the sharp rat-tat-tat sound of the anti-aircraft guns was continuously in the air.

On October 17, they boarded the steamer on the Yangtze Kiang which was to carry them to Ichang, and from its decks they looked back with melancholy eyes on Hankow, the doomed capital, which had given them such splendid opportunities of getting to know the mind and face—and, above all, the spirit—of wartime China. It was in Hankow that they had met the indomitable Chinese 'Reds', the men of the far-famed Eighth Route Army and their leaders like Chou-en-Lai, as also Kuomintang high officials, leftist intellectuals, Korean revolutionaries and even anti-Fascist Japanese. These meetings had made their stay in Hankow memorable. But to recapitulate them, we must go back in our story.

## A TOAST TO INDIAN FREEDOM.

*Manhus ghulami ko barh kar har manzil par thukraenge,  
Insani azadi ke liye jal jaenge kat jaenge,  
Phir Cheeni Hindi mil jul kar nusrat ke tarane gaenge,  
Azadiye alam ka parcham phir duniya par lehraenge !*

Forward, comrade, Forward ! We'll end this curse of slavery  
We'll go through fire, we'll die for human freedom.  
Indian and Chinese together will sing the song of victory  
And hoist over the world the brave new flag of freedom.

—SAGHAR NIZAMI.

“COMRADES ! I give you the toast of the independence  
of India.”

This is how one of the most remarkable banquets given in honour of the Indian Medical Mission began. In China the toasts are drunk at the beginning instead of at the end of a dinner. And the first toast that night was to the independence of India !

It was a dinner given at the Hankow office of the 8th Route Army\*, three days after the arrival of the Indian doctors in the war-time capital. Among those present were army officers, Communist party officials, the editor of the party paper, *Hsin Hua Jihbao* (New China Daily), a Russian correspondent, an American woman and an anti-Nazi German woman. And the five doctors from India, of course !

The dinner began with a series of toasts—to the independence of India, the United Front in China, the Eighth Route Army, the Soviet Union, etc.,—and ended with songs. All kinds

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\*Originally known as China's Red Army, after the Communist-Kuomintang United Front, it has been incorporated in the national forces and re-named 'Eighth Route Army.'

of songs. The Chinese Eighth Route Army song. *Chilai* song. The Yellow River song. The Russian Air Force song. *La Marseillaise*. British workers' song. *Vande Mataram* and Qazi Nazrul Islam's revolutionary anthem in Bengali, *Chalre Chalre*. The 'Reds' of China are very keen on songs and their infectious enthusiasm wore away the shyness of the Indians so that soon even the old Doctor Cholkar was lustily joining in the chorus. The wooden Hankow building resounded with songs of freedom in half a dozen different languages, sung in all the varying keys and pitches of the strangely assorted voices.

After the songs came speeches. Kai Feng, Head of the Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist party, a pale, tiny fellow with bright eyes, spoke in Chinese which was translated into German by Wong Bingnan of the International Propaganda Department of Chinese Communist party, and then rendered into English by Agnes Smedley, the American woman revolutionary writer who was present. Said Kai Feng amidst repeated applause : " This fight of China against imperialist Japan is not for herself alone but also for all the oppressed nations of the world. China will never forget the sympathy of Indians as demonstrated by their sending this medical unit to help the Chinese people and soldiers. China will pay back this debt of gratitude in India's hour of need, when India needs our help in her fight for freedom."

General Yeh Chien-Ying, Chief of Staff of the Eighth Route Army, and one of the most important military leaders of 'Red' China, a handsome, genial and robust man of about forty, who presided over the dinner, also spoke\*. On behalf of the

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\* Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru mentions " an interesting visit from General Yeh Chien-Ying of the famous Eighth Route Army " in his diary of the journey to China. It was from General Yeh that Panditji learnt at first hand " about the work the Eighth Route Army was doing, apart from its military activities ". ( "*China, Spain And War.*" )

Eighth Route Army he welcomed the Indian Medical Mission to China, expressing his country's gratitude to the Congress and Congress leaders, and mentioned how Japan had been held back for years by the united resistance of the Chinese people.

While replying, Doctor Atal was urged to speak in Hindustani which was then translated into English by Doctor Cholkar and finally rendered into Chinese by one of the reporters present.

During their stay in Hankow, the Indian doctors had several more opportunities of coming into contact with the Chinese Communists at the Eighth Route Army office. Having heard so much about them even in India and during the sea-voyage read Edgar Snow's "Red Star Over China", the Indians were very anxious to meet the indomitable 'Reds' who had survived a decade of fierce suppression by the Central Government, had undertaken the historic Long March of several thousand miles to Shensi in the Northwest, setting up their Communist government there, and yet were to-day the spearhead of the Chinese United Front against Japan. The five doctors held different views about Communism but they were all unanimous in their interest in and admiration for the Chinese 'Reds' and their gallant Eighth Route Army which had acquired an almost legendary reputation for hardihood, discipline and uncompromising opposition to the aggressor. They were already discussing among themselves the possibilities of the Mission being sent to work with the Eighth Route Army.

Following the formal banquet, the doctors were also invited to come in the day time and have an ordinary "8-cent meal." It was a completely democratic affair, officers and men lunching together at a common table. These soldiers looked healthy and

intelligent, mostly of the friendly, peasant type. The youngest was hardly 15 years old. The "8-cent meal" was simple but good and was inevitably followed by more songs and more speeches.

The most important Communist leader they met in Hankow was General Chou En-lai. A veteran revolutionary and one of the three most important Communists in China, once there was a price of 80,000 dollars on his head offered by the Central Government. To-day he is the Vice-Director of the Political Mass Mobilisation Department in the same Central Government and, besides, acts as liaison between the Kuomintang and the Communists to ensure the smooth working of the United Front. Before meeting him, they had already read a lot about him in Snow's "Red Star Over China" in which he is described as :—

".....of slender stature, of medium height, with slight wiry frame, boyish in appearance, despite his long black beard, and with large warm deep-set eyes. There was certainly a kind of magnetism about him that seemed to derive from a curious combination of shyness, personal charm and the complete assurance of command.....He was evidently that rarest of all creatures in China, a pure intellectual in whom action was perfectly co-ordinated with knowledge and conviction. He was a scholar turned insurrectionist."

The Indians found Chou (as the diary of one of them records) "impatient, full of energy, intellectual-looking, with intelligent eyes and thick eye-brows which are rare in China." Around him there was the atmosphere of a busy American executive—telephones ringing, telegrams and dispatches arriving every few minutes, files, papers, maps and books. Quite a contrast to the mud but and primitive furniture of Chou's headquarters in 1936 that

Snow describes in his book. He was still dressed like an ordinary soldier but he had an air of authority and quiet efficiency about him. Between telephone conversations and instructions to his subordinates, he was also giving an interview to the press representatives, explaining to them the military situation. He was talking in Chinese but he knows English quite well and corrected the interpreter when he made a mistake in translating what he said to the English and American correspondents present. Even while answering the reporters' questions, he also found time to converse with the Indian doctors and evinced a keen interest in the work of the Mission. He beamed with delight when he was told that they would like to work with the Eighth Route Army and assured them of the fullest co-operation from his side and all possible facilities.

The Indians took an immediate liking to Chou and later had one or two more opportunities of meeting him. At one of the many dinners given in their honour in Hankow, they found that at the end of the feast when all around there was more than sufficient evidence of alcoholic after-effects, General Chou remained the only sober man among his compatriots.

The Hankow interlude was crowded with interesting and oddly assorted people they met. Yu Yu Jen (pronounced Ren), President of the Control Yuan, a grand old man with a thin long beard, reminiscent of the traditional pictures of Confucius, was the soul of courtesy and politeness. Freda Utley, the English woman journalist, stout and strong (quite a different type from the smart and chic Charlotte Haldane they had met in Hongkong), who wrote that excellent book *Japan's Feet of Clay*, one of the first warnings sounded against the increasing bellicosity of Nippon. For years she had been a Communist (or at least a sympathiser)



but later she had fallen out with the Comintern on ideological grounds. She had come to Hankow, fearing that the Chinese Communists would have nothing to do with her as she was accused by Moscow of being a "renegade". But actually they befriended her, gave her whatever information she required, invited her to several of the functions arranged at the Eighth Route Army office for the Indian doctors and even gave a tea party in her honour !

Among others, they met three Korean revolutionaries and one anti-Fascist Japanese writer who is now working with the Eighth Route Army. The conversation was carried on through a relay of interpreters—from Japanese into Korean into Chinese into German into English ! It was interesting to see identity of ideological convictions cutting across barriers of race and nationality. The Japanese writer was engaged in sending subversive propaganda among his compatriot troops in occupied China with a view to overthrow the present militarist-jingo stranglehold on Japan. He lived among the Chinese and was treated as a Comrade. Then there was Mrs. Anna Wong, a German (Aryan) by birth, married to a Chinese Communist, who has adopted China as her homeland and is as bitterly hostile to the Fuehrer of Germany as to the Japanese from whose bombs she has had several hair's breadth escapes. It was in Hankow that they first met a Soviet citizen. He was Ragov, the genial and ever-smiling Manager of the Tass Agency in Hankow, who cabled to Moscow quite a long 'story' about the Indian doctors.

The only Indians they met were some Sikhs employed by English officials and firms in the British Concession. They were humble, almost illiterate people, but extremely hospitable and more than happy to meet visitors from the old country. They took the doctors to their *Gurudwara* where a small meeting was addressed

by Doctor Atal in Hindustani. Though they had been living in China for years, perhaps this was the first occasion they heard of the implications of China's gallant war of resistance.

The most remarkable personality they met, however, was Agnes Smedley. Dressed in a leather jacket, with her shingled grey hair, rough-looking, her hardened features bearing witness to a life of constant struggle and revolutionary activity, this American woman was the first to greet the Indian doctors when they arrived in Hankow. And throughout their stay, she acted as their unofficial hostess, looking after their needs with an almost maternal affection.

The amazing life story of Agnes Smedley would fill several volumes. Daughter of American working class parents, she has been a fighter for social justice and proletarian revolution all her life, an exile from home, living in England, Germany, Soviet Union and, finally, in 'Red' China.\*

To the Indian doctors, Agnes Smedley held a special fascination because of her life-long association with Indian revolutionaries and the cause of Indian freedom. As a young woman she heard an Indian lecturer at the University of California and immediately became interested in India and the Indian national movement.

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\* Upton Sinclair once wrote of her: "Newspaper dispatches (February 1937) bring us the strange tale from the province of Shensi in the remote northwestern part of China. An American woman, a school teacher from the Middle West, has become one of the leaders of the radicals of that disturbed and dangerous front of the world. She is organising in Sian-fu a people's front of the Chinese against the Japanese ...Why does she take up the people's first of India and then of China, making their cause her own, even to starvation and death?...if she wins, this schoolteacher from the American Far West will be remembered as we remember Lafayette and as the French remember Joan of Arc."

Later in New York she met others and became a determined anti-Imperialist. When the First World War broke out she protested against the American government helping the British to jail Indian revolutionaries. As a consequence she was herself put into prison and given the "third degree". After the war when she was released she worked her passage to England, from there she went to the Soviet Union, and finally settled down in Germany where she was a close associate of a group of Indian political exiles and revolutionaries then living in Germany. She came to China as a correspondent but after the advent of Hitler preferred not to return to Germany. Since then she has lived in China with occasional trips to Russia. She had many interesting and exciting anecdotes to relate about the life of Indian revolutionaries in America and Germany. It was remarkable that this American woman who has never set foot on Indian soil knew so much about India and felt so intensely for the cause of Indian freedom which she had made her own by devoted service and sacrifice

That is why, among all the people in Hankow, Agnes Smedley became the best "friend, hostess and guide" to the Indian doctors. And that is why at the Eighth Route Army dinner when they drank the toast of Indian freedom she stood up with the five Indians to acknowledge it on behalf of India !

## DANGEROUS MOONLIGHT

*"Japan's one course is to beat China to her knees."*

—PRINCE KONOYE.

*"War is the father of all creation and the mother of civilization."*

—*Japanese War Department  
Manifest.*

**E**vacuation !

On the way from Hankow to Ichang, the Indian doctors had ample opportunity to get familiar with the horror and tragedy of a civilian population fleeing from a ruthless invading army. The happy days in Hankow, the crowded busy streets, the friendly dinners and feasts, the pageantry of traditional festivals and the fervour of patriotic celebrations—all that seemed to be left, far, far behind. In steamers, in launches, in boats of all sizes and shapes, on rafts, the population of a whole city was moving upstream, with bag and baggage, crying children; goats and chicken. They had left behind their homes, and cast melancholy looks in the direction of the city as the river took a turn and Hankow disappeared behind a crest of hills. Shall we ever be able to return ?, they seemed to say. But they did not say it. The stoical Chinese do not shed tears !

The steamer on which the doctors travelled was, like everything else afloat on the river, crowded beyond capacity. Sufficient shipping space could not be provided, among other reasons, because several big ships had been sunk in the river to make it unnavigable beyond Hankow and thus to check the Japanese advance.

Seen from the deck of the steamer, Yangtze Kiang looked broader than even the Ganges at Allahabad. Low hills ran

parallel to the Southern bank, but on the north were the immense plains of China—miles upon miles of green fields dotted with clusters of mud huts bearing remarkable resemblance to Indian villages. Over the fair and verdant land, however, lay the shadow of war. And through the fields could be seen marching columns of retreating soldiers.

The effect of the depressing spectacle was somewhat relieved by new friendships made on board. Among the fellow-passengers was Professor Tao, famous educationist and founder of the "Little Teacher" movement, and a member of the People's Political Council (the Chinese Parliament) which he was going to attend in Chungking, the new capital. The bald-headed and spectacled Professor took it upon himself to teach them Chinese in Roman characters and helped to pass the time usefully. Also on board were other newly-elected members of the People's Political Council all of whom expressed their keenness on the democratic reorientation of the political life of the country.

The "Little Teacher" movement interested the doctors greatly and the enthusiastic founder was only too anxious to enlighten them. The "Little Teachers" are school boys and girls between the ages of ten and fifteen, who tour the countryside (even behind the enemy lines in Japanese-occupied territory), teaching the peasants, adults and children alike, to read and write and explaining to them the ideological fundamentals of the war of resistance against Japan. On board was a ten-year old "Little Teacher" who came to see the doctors as soon as he heard of them and with touching cordiality, offered to teach them the new patriotic songs. Every one was greatly impressed by the intelligence, good manners and patriotic zeal of this little crusader who was fighting for the freedom of his country in his own way, no less gallantly than the

soldiers at the front. The Japanese, with their overwhelming armed might, can here and there defeat the Chinese army. But never can they hope to defeat this other Chinese army of which the "Little Teachers" are an important squadron, for the weapons with which they wage war upon Japan are the weapons of the spirit.

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Ichang which they reached after four days of slow crawling up the river is a small town which is important only because it is the last port on the Yangtze which the big steamers can reach. Further up, the river passes through narrow and dangerous gorges which only the smaller boats can negotiate. Even Ichang was not without signs of Imperialist-capitalist penetration—a Standard Oil plant, British commercial firms, missionaries, and gun-boats flying the Union Jack !

From October 22 to November 16, the doctors spent 26 days in Ichang, working the while in the No. 1 Military Base Hospital as well as the No. 86 Red Cross Hospital. The wounded had been brought here from Hankow but not all of them survived the journey. Several of the hospital ships on the way were bombed by the Japanese and at least in one case, the wounded soldiers struggling in the water were further dive-bombed and machine-gunned ! Equally depressing was the report that the boat carrying their friends from the Eighth Route Army office in Hankow had been bombed and sunk and out of those on board forty had been killed and the survivors had gone by a different route to Changsha. On the very day they reached Ichang, news came that Canton had fallen and next day a Chinese pilot brought the report that Hankow had been bombed four times that day and might fall any moment. The Japanese were pushing on steadily and even Ichang might soon have to be evacuated.

Days of anxiety, rumours, even a certain amount of panic, while they waited week after week for orders to move that might come any moment. The weather became colder and colder every day, cold and foggy and rainy, a sample of what they might expect if they went further north-west to work with the Eighth Route Army in Sian. But, under the inspiring leadership of Dr. Atal, the Indian doctors took the challenge of the elements and decided to acclimatize themselves to the weather conditions. Every evening, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. they practised walking and hill-climbing and on a particularly cold and rainy day they walked ten miles up to the Ichang gorge, a famous local landmark, and after watching the strong current of the river flowing between steep cliffs, returned soaked and exhausted, but happy at their achievement.

By the beginning of November, Ichang itself had come within the range of Japanese bombers. The elements were in conspiracy with the enemy and the moonlit nights were clear of fog or mist. November 3—the birthday of the Japanese emperor—was celebrated by Mikado's children by bombing many Chinese cities but Ichang was spared. Next day, however, a reconnaissance plane appeared, followed 24 hours later by nine bombers. The doctors were at the hospital and went to the dug-out with their patients. They could clearly hear the shells bursting, the anti-aircraft guns barking intermittently and a horrible new sound—the shrieking bomb! But there were no casualties, the bombs had fallen mostly in the countryside and there were a few craters near the aerodrome which obviously had been the objective.

The night of the full moon, November 7, brought another flock of the evil birds. Provoked perhaps by their previous failure, this time they took no chances and in wave after wave dive-bombed the airfield from a very low height. There were

many casualties this time and several residential buildings were hit. Alas, the moon could not be blacked-out !

The repeated visits of the Japanese bombers and the fact that communications had broken off with Hankow created a feeling of great uneasiness in the town and people started rushing for Chungking. A few defeatists started circulating the rumour of Chinese military collapse and the authorities had to send a plane which showered leaflets bearing a statement signed by the Generalissimo to the effect that despite reverses the fight against Japan would continue unabated and expressing the Government's—and the people's—faith in ultimate victory. This reassuring declaration silenced the defeatists but preparations for evacuation were continued. The Indian Unit had received instructions to proceed to Chungking and only awaited a suitable boat to take them.

Strangely enough, repeated bombing, instead of breaking morale, helps to build it up. After the panic of the first two or three air raids, people find their nerves adjusting themselves to withstand the shock. By the time they left Ichang, the Indian doctors had mastered their fear of bombs to such an extent that during the last few days they did not trouble even to go to the dug-out when the siren sounded its warning. One night even as bombs were falling on the Ichang airfield, they were sitting with happy faces near a short-wave radio-set, for after trying for several days they had got an Indian station—Calcutta. The fascination of the songs from India proved stronger than the fear of the Japanese bombs !

Another interesting diversion occurred while they were going through the boxes of medicines they had brought with them from India. One of these looked rather odd in size and when opened revealed not medicines—but a gramophone ! Surprised and curious, they took it out and found in it a chit bearing a familiar signature.



It was a present from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who had sent it specially from England. They were sorry they had not discovered it earlier as the packing-case had remained hidden among the medicine chests all these weeks but this sudden discovery gave them additional pleasure and all through the night they remained awake, playing the records over and over again, deeply touched by Nehru's generosity and foresight !

On November 16, they left by launch for Chungking, their fellow-passengers being two Chinese officials and eight Norwegian missionaries out of whom six were women who had come all the way from Norway to marry their respective betrothed and to settle with them in the interior of China. Someone immediately named them "The Six Norwegian Brides" and in an atmosphere of war and evacuation and constant fear of air-raids, they certainly proved a more than welcome reminder that love and romance and the simple graces of human life were not yet dead in the world.

## BLITZ OVER CHUNGKING

*"What do I make of these Chinese? They are fighting a war such as no accidental nation would have the patience to fight. They do not want peace, unless it is peace with honour. If they do not triumph, then all that they fought for and stood for will be in ruins. And that "all" embraces civilization as we have known it. And the amazing thing is that while they are fighting they are looking ahead."*

—D. F. KARAKA in *"Chungking Diary"*.

**P**UFFING its way slowly against the dangerously fast-flowing current of the river, the tiny steam boat moves at a snail's speed, hardly two or three miles an hour! The barges and rowing boats are being pulled by ropes, as is done in Kashmir.

The Yangtze gets narrower as it winds through a series of magnificent gorges, sheer cliffs shooting up to a tremendous height on either side. Dwarfed by these giants of nature, one gets a feeling of smallness, of the insignificance of man.

As it takes a turn, the steam-boat blows its whistle. A peculiar echo—or, rather, a series of echoes—answers back. This is known as the "windbox" gorge. The Chinese have picturesque names for everything.

On the second day, the gorges and the cliffs give way to lower hills. This is Szechuan, which literally means "Four Rivers", the second largest province of China and the most thickly populated. There are pretty little villages and towns on either side, tarred roads, electricity, orange-groves and gardens, tiled and white-washed cottages. War, one feels, has not yet penetrated this fair land—till one sees the newly-constructed military hospitals with freshly painted Red Cross signs, and the columns of soldiers marching back from Hankow and Ichang.

On the third and fourth day of the journey, one sees more orange-groves and vegetable patches on sloping hills, but also planes droning overhead and gun-boats steaming along in the river. Of course, these are Chinese planes and gun-boats and sailors wave and cheer as the little boat passes by.

The weather gets foggy and cold, biting cold, and instead of orange-groves there are pine forests on the hill slopes. The little steam-boat whistles bravely as it cuts its way through fog and ice-cold water. The weather proclaims that Chungking is near.

On the sixth day, the plucky little boat reaches "journey's end" and after some coughing and spluttering of engines and manoeuvring through a medley of craft comes to rest alongside the South Bank Wharf. The Mission is received by Doctor Mei, the Mayor of Chungking, a military officer representing the Generalissimo, Professor Tan Yan Shan of the Shantiniketan "Cheena Bhuvan", the President of the Buddhist Society and some Canadian missionaries with whom the doctors are to stay. Quite a flattering reception. The Generalissimo's representative offers the use of the Foreign Guest House, a signal honour as it is generally reserved for Ambassadors and diplomats of the highest position, but Dr. Atal declines with thanks, politely explaining that he knows accomodation in the city is extremely limited and he does not wish to cause unnecessary inconvenience to the Government guests.

Bidding good-bye to their fellow-passengers, the Indian doctors step into the Government launch and are taken to the city on the other side of the river. On alighting, they see an unending flight of steps and, shaking off the fatigue of the journey, they square their shoulders and take a long breath to climb the first—but, alas, not the last—flight of steps they had to negotiate in China's war-time capital.

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Fifteen hundred miles from Shanghai and the sea, Chungking lies amidst the Szechuan hills at the confluence of two great rivers of China—the Yangtze and the Kialing. It is said to have been the site of a city for over four thousand years but till after the evacuation of Hankow few could have imagined that this obscure hill resort in the interior would one day be the successor of the classic cities of Peking and Nanking as the capital of China. The exigencies of war, however, have been continuously shifting the country's centre of gravity westwards. It is more than a mere change of capitals, and not entirely without its advantages. Strategically, of course, the main consideration was to seek safety in a place farthest removed from the Japanese bases in occupied territory. But at the same time, the shifting of the capital has brought a wave of new life to the hitherto neglected and backward interior. For centuries the eastern sea-board—all the way from Peking in the north to Canton in the South—has held the monopoly not only of administration but also of industry, commerce, education and culture. With the invasion by Japan, however, the "superior" people of the ports have had to flee westwards, whole universities with their students and their libraries, have been re-established in the villages of the interior, administrators and scholars, writers and artists, merchants and industrialists are having, in many cases, their first glimpse of the vast "Good Earth" of their country and the hills and plains of Kansu, Shansi, Hupeh, Hunan and Szechuan provinces are awakening to a new life. Chungking may well be regarded as the symbol and focal point of this process by which a nation is seeking, spiritually as well as physically, to re-discover itself.

The doctors found Chungking humming with activity. With the arrival of the evacuees from the east including the Government and Kuomintang officials and their families, the population had increased many times over and buildings of the utilitarian

American type were going up everywhere at a furious speed. Chungking, like Rome, is situated on a series of hills and going anywhere in the city means climbing up and climbing down innumerable stairs. The rich folk and the high officials are carried in sedan chairs, the ordinary people just try to get used to the eternal going-up-going-down process. In the narrow streets the shops were full but everything was unbelievably expensive. Not the military atmosphere of Hankow, yet one saw quite a number of officers and soldiers on leave going about. The walls of the city were plastered with strikingly colourful propaganda posters and there was an atmosphere of intense patriotic feeling and political activity. There were meetings and processions and group discussions and among the intelligentsia one noticed a distinct leftward trend which was also mirrored in the bookshops where a great deal of socialist and Communist literature was on sale.

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During their two-months stay in Chungking, the doctors met quite a number of the dignitaries and high officials of the Chinese government. The only notable exception was the Generalissimo himself, an omission deeply regretted by both sides. Most of the time he was busy re-organising the new defence lines necessitated by the fall of Hankow. Then just when an appointment was fixed they received orders to start for Yen-an and the Generalissimo graciously sent a message expressing his regret that they would not be able to keep the appointment and asking them not to mind it but to proceed to their post of duty, according to arrangements made by the Red Cross. To the head of the Chinese government the care of the wounded soldiers was much more important than a courtesy call and formal interview !

They, however, did meet Madame Chiang Kai-Shek at a New Year's Eve social gathering held under the auspices of the New Life Movement.\* She received them with gracious cordiality and, later, in her speech she spoke of China's gratitude to India and the Congress for sending the Mission. She looked tired and strained which was not surprising in view of her overwork and anxiety for her country's future. Yet she looked an embodiment of charm in her simple blue Chinese gown and occasionally the flash of a smile illuminated her countenance. An atmosphere of informality and equality characterised the function which testified to Madame's popularity with the young and old alike. At the same meeting, they also met the incredible Donald, the white-haired sixty-year old Australian, who has played a remarkable part in the history of modern China as a friend, confidante and adviser of some of the greatest men of the country. He came to China as a newspaper man and stayed on to befriend the leaders of the revolution whom he helped to overthrow the Manchu dynasty. He was a great friend of Sun Yat-Sen as also of Madame Chiang's father. To-day he is an unofficial adviser to the Chiangs and their inseparable companion.

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\* "The New Life Movement, which borrows largely from the Y. M. C. A. was an attempt during the days of the Civil war to steal Red thunder by a positive programme of self-help and betterment. Villages are organised, children are instructed, with emphasis on 'orderliness, cleanliness, diligence, and propriety.' Mass meetings are held all over China, with slogans repeating simple ethical and hygienic principles, like "Don't crowd; Keep in line;" "Don't spit — cleanliness prevents disease" and "Avoid wine, women and gambling". Madame Chiang thinks the New Life Movement is the biggest thing the Kuomintang has done."—JOHN GUNTHER in "*Inside Asia*."

"Madame Chiang always stresses the point that the details — modesty and economy in dress, cleanliness, improvement in table manners, moderation in cigarette smoking — are merely outward signs of a more important spiritual reform that the Generalissimo is trying to achieve for the people."—EMILY HAHN in "*The Soong Sisters*."

President Lin Sen was one of the first eminent Chinese they met on their arrival in Chungking. With Professor Tan Yan Shan they went to the headquarters of the National Government, a simple building five miles away from the city. They were ushered in a big reception room by a military officer. The room was bare and had no furniture except a few chairs and the Indians were irresistibly struck by the contrast with the ostentation, pomp and luxury of the Viceregal Lodge in New Delhi. Their host came a little late and at once captivated them with his charm of manner and impressive personality. The President of the Chinese Republic was a perfect product of the serene wisdom and ancient culture of his country. Even in his old age he looked very handsome, the few hairs in his beard were all white and very long and he wore a jacket over his long black gown. He had the air of a sage and a scholar. Through his rimless glasses, he looked at his guests with eyes full of wisdom and kindness.

Talking through Professor Tan Yan Shan who speaks fluent English and acted as an interpreter, President Lin made the very first enquiry about the health of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Then for a long time he spoke of the cultural and political relations that have existed through the centuries between India and China, the historical background, the influence of Buddhism, etc. He stressed the need for a perfect solidarity between the peoples of the two countries. When the conversation came to a close, the Indian doctors came away with the feeling that they had met and talked to a truly great man.

Among others, they met Tai Chi Tao, a Kuomintang politician of the older generation and President of the Examination Yuan.\* He was very courteous and talked a good deal to the

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\*The functions of the Chinese government are divided into five Yuans or departments — Executive, Legislative, Examination, Control and Judicial.

doctors, explaining to them that every country has its own philosophy of life and, therefore, China needed neither capitalism nor communism but the "San Min Chu-i" or the three principles of Dr. Sun Yat Sen.

The inevitable round of formal banquets in their honour. At the dinner with the Central Political Council all the big government officials were present. The Central Executive of the Kuomintang gave a lunch at which they met Dr. F. C. Yen, the Minister of Health, who assured them that their journey to Yenan would be arranged but they would have to wait for their trucks which, due to the fall of Canton, were coming via Indo-China. The Sino-Indian Association and the Buddhist Association jointly gave a vegetarian dinner at which the skilful cooks had prepared all the vegetarian dishes in such a manner as to resemble meat preparations. Thus one could eat roast 'chicken,' boiled 'duck' and 'mutton' cutlets without infringing the Buddhist code of non-injury to animals !

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After some time the waiting game began to pall on their nerves. They wanted to be set to work at the front and here they were in the capital, enjoying banquets and listening to laudatory speeches !

To while away the time they went to the cinema and saw a Russian film entitled "If War Comes To-morrow." It was an anti-Nazi film, dramatising an imaginary invasion of the Soviet Union and showing how the people's forces drive away the invader. A prophetic vision of the shape of things to come !

They met their Hankow friends of the Eighth Route Army and the "New China Daily" and learnt from them of the



harrowing tragedy in which many of their comrades lost their lives en route. A memorial meeting was being held under the auspices of the "New China Daily" to honour the dead and the Indian doctors went to attend it with a wreath on behalf of the Congress and the Indian people. The meeting which was attended largely by Communists and leftist intellectuals was held in one of the big halls. Doctor Sun Yat-Sen's portrait occupied the pride of place on the dais. Above it the Chinese national flag was crossed with the Kuomintang flag. Significantly enough, there was not a single Red Flag in the hall. Later on they were to learn that the Chinese Communists do not use the Red Flag at all and have adopted the Chinese national flag as their own! The meeting lasted three hours and speeches were delivered, among others, by an anti-fascist Japanese girl, a Korean revolutionary and an American journalist. On behalf of the Indian Mission, Doctor Basu spoke—the first speech he ever delivered. But he was warmly applauded when he spoke of the bonds of fraternal unity that bound India and China together.

With nothing else to do, they went on an excursion to the hot springs in the hills. On the way they fell in with a party of students from Sinkiang who said they were studying at the Central University on scholarships, granted by the Chinese government. Sinkiang is a remote region which touches on one side the border of Kashmir and on the other the Soviet frontier. Because of its strategic position, more than one power has been interested in Sinkiang and not long ago it was a hot-bed of international diplomacy and intrigue. The population is all Muslim, a mixture of Turkoman and Chinese racial strains, and attempts were being made once to create an "independent" Sinkiang owing allegiance to the British and the name of Khalid Sheldrake, an Englishman converted to Islam, was being freely mentioned as a likely "Sultan

of Sinkiang." To-day, however, people of Sinkiang are loyal to the central government of China. These students were as zealous in their patriotic devotion as any other Chinese youths. Curiously enough, several of these boys spoke Hindustani and said they had been to Kashmir and the Punjab.

The only Indian they met in Chungking was an old Hakim from Peshawar who had a flourishing practice as an eye-specialist. For years he had lived in China, first in Shanghai, then in Hankow, and had now settled down for good in the new capital.

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In China, even foreigners must have Chinese names duly printed in Chinese characters on their visiting cards. At the suggestion of Professor Tan Yan Shan, the Indian doctors acquired dignified Chinese names along with their respective seals without which no one in China can sign an official or legal document.

Thus Atal became *An Teh Hua* (literally "Peace and Virtue of China"); Cholkar became *Cho Kai Hua* ("Open table of China"); Kotnis became *Kho Teh Hua* ("Probable Virtue of China"); Mukerji became *Mu Khe Hua* ("Engraving of China"); and Basu retained his name by becoming *Ba Su Hua* ("Thinking of China"). The word "Hua" (which means both "China" and "flower") was specially added to each of their names to indicate their attachment to the cause of China.

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Tired of waiting for their convoy to start for Yen-an, the doctors started working in the two local hospitals—the Municipal Hospital and the Red Cross Hospital. Both the hospitals were very efficiently run. The patients were mostly civilians and actually there was not much work for the Indian Unit to do here.

Then the air-raids started. The Japanese, having established new air-bases in Hankow and even further west were able to send their long-range bombers to raid the new capital in an attempt to disorganize the administration and shatter the morale of the citizens. At that time the world-famous Chungking air-raid shelters had not yet been dug out in the surrounding hills and casualties in each raid were heavy.

January 15 was a cold but bright day and the unusual sunshine was most welcome after a week of fog and mist and creeping cold. Everyone went about, gay and buoyant, and almost a holiday spirit prevailed in the city. It was on that very day that the Imperial Air Force of Japan decided to pay a visit to the capital of war-time China !

It was the worst and grimmest air-raid the Indians had experienced so far. It was the blitz, a calculated, dastardly attack on the civilian population. Sitting in a restaurant, they could hear the whole devilish drama—the peculiar swish and whistle as the bombs hurtled through the air, the explosion that followed, the crash of the falling debris, the bark of the anti-aircraft guns and then the drone of the Chinese fighter planes going up, the rat-tat-tat of machine gun fire as the invaders were engaged in dog fights. Every time a bomb fell in the neighbourhood the building shook, girls screamed, the bravest hearts quaked within a calm exterior.

Suddenly there was the usual evil swish of a falling bomb, a deafening explosion and the wooden building was shaken to its foundations. Window panes went flying through the rooms, glasses and cups were flung from the tables. Plaster came off the walls and ceiling, and a cloud of smoke and dust came through the open windows—and a pungent smell ! Something was burning. Eerie silence for a moment. Then the All-clear sounded and everyone

rushed outside to see the big five-storied building across the road reduced to a mass of smoking debris. It gave one a strange and unpleasant feeling in the pit of the stomach to realize that had there been a slight breeze to deflect the bomb twenty feet more in its fall one would not have been alive to contemplate that scene of tragedy !

But doctors are trained not to give way to gloomy introspection when there is work to be done, lives to be saved. Within a minute they were rushing to the blitzed building and helping the A. R. P. workers to clear the debris and drag out the people who might be buried alive. It was a harrowing spectacle. Most of the casualties were women and children as the men, being factory workers, had gone out to work. Two hundred had been killed outright by that one bomb. Bodies lay broken and mangled everywhere. Most pitiable of all was the sight of a young mother with her baby still sucking at her breast. There was not a scratch on their bodies. They had died of concussion, just as they were ! The injured were rushed on stretchers to the hospitals and the doctors were kept engaged till late at night—operating, amputating, dressing wounds. They had been through air-raids before in Canton, Hankow and Ichang. But this was their first baptism of blood and fire.

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In the shadow of death life acquires a new meaning. The greater the danger the sharper becomes one's appetite for living. It was after this severe air-raid that the Indian doctors could appreciate the gay, devil-may-care attitude of the young Chinese pilots whom they had met so often in cafes, laughing, playing billiards or toasting each other, though they knew the very next day they might be killed in a dog fight. Life is short. Make the best

of it while it lasts. Not only in Chungking but all over the war-torn world millions are succumbing to this mood of cheerful fatalism !

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Anxious to see a good modern Chinese drama on the stage, they went with Dr. Wong to see a play the title of which, literally translated, would mean "Shanghai Within Five Years"—or "Shanghai Five Years Ago". The performance lasted five hours—from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Except for its inordinate length, the play had nothing in common with the traditional dramas of the Indian stage. The stage settings were extremely realistic—representing a cross-section of a double-storied tenement house in the working class quarter of Shanghai so that all along one saw not only what happens to the principal characters but also simultaneously watched other families reacting to the domestic and national crises dramatized in the play.

The story was simple and could be followed even without understanding the dialogue. There are two friends. The one who is married has to go to Manchuria and while going leaves his wife and infant daughter in the care of his friend. In Manchuria he is caught by the Japanese and imprisoned. For five years his family gets no news of him and he is presumed to be dead. His friend and wife (who still cherish his memory) fall in love with each other and start living together. The first one comes back, unknown to his friend and wife, sees them happy and rather than spoil their happiness he goes away to enlist in the army to fight the Japanese. The acting was realistic and, judging from the applause, the dialogues were instinct with patriotic appeal. And in the background throughout was the growing anti-Japanese sentiment.

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While their minds were trying to attune themselves to the larger tragedy of China, all the way from India came news of a stunning personal tragedy.

Returning to their lodgings after an evening walk, they were delighted to find a pile of letters on the table. Mail from home ! Each of them picked up his respective letters and for sometime forgot about Kotnis. Then someone noticed that he was sitting strangely silent by the fire-side. Tears were streaming down his face. Briefly he informed them that he had received news of his father's death.

It was later that they learnt the details of the tragedy. The elder Kotnis (whom they had all seen bidding farewell to his son at Ballard Pier) had been a clerk in a mill in Sholapur. He had sent his son to the medical college in Bombay and for five years paid for the expensive education by incurring increasingly heavy debts. The son knew nothing of the burden his father carried. And the father was secure in the hope that after graduation the son would set up practice and help to repay the debts. Dwarkanath, however, decided to go to China with the medical mission and it speaks volumes for the old man's self-sacrificing patriotism that he did not stop his son. On the other hand he gave him his blessings and told him that he was proud his son had been selected to go on such a great mission. After his departure the financial condition had become too desperate and, unable to bear it, the poor old man had committed suicide.

It was a tragic story of almost classical poignance. The effect it had on the bereaved son can hardly be imagined. The four colleagues who heard it were deeply touched and urged Kotnis to go back home to be with his mother and sister. But in that hour of crushing grief, young Kotnis proved his mettle. He said in

effect, "No I cannot go back. The Congress has sent me here and we have all signed a contract that none of us would go back before at least one year is completed. Now that my father has made the supreme sacrifice, the only thing for me to do is to give my life too for the cause that he held so dear."

After that, his one great interest in life was to identify himself as closely as possible with the Chinese people, to learn their language and manners, so as to be able to serve them better. When on January 22, 1939, they left in a caravan of trucks for Yen-an, his grief-ridden face brightened as if he was looking forward to an event of great joy and triumph. He was looking forward to his death !

## THE AMAZING MR. ALLEY

*"The only failure is failure to act."*

— MARSHAL CHIANG KAI-SHEK.

*"One can never give up hope in China somehow. As soon as you feel that all is lost, some meteoric phenomenon like this appears and you realize again the immense vitality lying immobile in this vast nation."*

— NYM WALES in *"China Builds for Democracy"*.

*".....this fascinating experiment which had already achieved so much and which held so much promise for the future.....the experience of China is of inestimable value to us and I am sure we can learn much from it."*

— JAWAHARLAL NEHRU (*Foreword to*  
*"China Builds for Democracy."*)

TO go back to that terrible air-raid in Chungking.

There is something worse than fear of death. It is the grim uncertainty of indiscriminate aerial bombing. Would the next moment find one alive—or dead, blown to fragments of flesh and bone, just a splash of blood on a wall? In the agony of suspense one dies a thousand deaths. One's thoughts and emotions are completely dissolved in the elemental instinct of survival.

As the bombs were crashing all over the city, the two hundred and odd people huddled together in the large restaurant, including the Indian doctors, sat or stood with tense and strained expressions. Chopsticks were dropped, the soup grew cold in the bowls, plates full of noodles and fried rice and shrimps lay neglected on the tables. Who could think of eating at such a time?



And yet it seemed that at least one person could ! All eyes were focussed on him as if he was the ninth wonder of the world and for a moment the amazing spectacle made them even forget the air-raid. He was a stocky, weather-beaten, red-haired middle aged man in informal shirt and shorts, and unhurriedly, as if no bombs were crashing around, he was eating his food. And as he ate, he was calmly reading a newspaper. The fact that the man appeared to be a European and that he was reading an Indian newspaper—*The Bombay Chronicle*, to be exact—added to the mystery and made the Indians naturally very curious about him. As they approached his table, he stopped eating, looked at the paper, looked at them, looked at the paper again, smiled and extended his hand.

"My name is Rewi Alley", he said, "And you, I presume, are the doctors from India. Please be seated." He had recognized them because he had been reading a report about them in the *Chronicle* and looking at their photographs published along with it.

When they expressed their amazement that he should be able to calmly concentrate on his food while bombs were bursting across the road, he chuckled good naturedly, "What is the use of spoiling such a good dinner ? If I die, let it be with a stomach that is full and contented."

It was thus that they met Rewi Alley of whom they had already heard a little as a New Zealander who had adopted China as his homeland and devoted his whole life to the welfare of the Chinese people. Soon they were to learn more about the amazing Mr. Alley (or Ai-li as the Chinese affectionately call him) and the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives (popularly abbreviated into C.I.C.) of which he is the co-founder, Chief Adviser, Field Secretary—in short, nurse, mother and father all rolled into one.\*

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\* For a detailed and comprehensive account of the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives, the reader is referred to "China Builds For Democracy" by Nym Wales, with a Foreword by Jawaharlal Nehru, published by Kitabistan, Allahabad.

Rewi Alley fought in the last war and was disillusioned. Added to this disillusion was a heritage of Irish idealism, Puritan seriousness, pioneer doggedness and a general interest in all aspects of social justice. His father was a schoolmaster of very advanced social ideas and a strong advocate of co-operative agriculture. His mother was one of the earliest fighters for woman's suffrage in New Zealand. For some years after the armistice, young Rewi tried his hand at sheep-farming but, some years later, a restless soul and lust for adventure prompted him to sell it off and go to China "to see what the new revolution was all about." In Shanghai he got a job as a factory inspector in the municipality. He was already in sympathy with the objectives of China's national revolution, and close contact with the Chinese workers and the underprivileged class won him over entirely to their cause. In the course of his daily factory inspection he was appalled by the conditions of Chinese labourers, the low wages, the miserable slums in which they were condemned to live, the utter absence of safety devices in the factories which resulted in numerous accidents—and yet there was no provision for insurance, medical treatment or compensation for permanent injury. He used his official position to improve the lot of the workers to whatever little extent he could and as the official mediator in strikes and labour troubles he was often able to secure better terms for workers. Naturally he came to be loved and almost idolized by the working class families of Shanghai and yet, because of his integrity of character, even the factory-owners respected him. His annual leave he spent in touring the districts of the interior, studying rural industries and crafts, learning the language and the manners of the Chinese people. During the Suiyan famine of 1928-29 and the Yangtze flood of 1931, he worked for the relief and rehabilitation of the millions who were hungry and homeless. He completed his identification with the Chinese people by adopting two famine orphans and bringing them up as his sons.

To this man in August 1938 came the vision of an industrial renaissance of wartime China. Together with American and Chinese friends, he discussed various schemes and finally they hit upon the plan for a country-wide net-work of industrial co-operatives. With Rewi Alley, to think is to act. And soon, with the co-operation of young and enthusiastic Chinese engineers who resigned their more lucrative jobs to take up this work and the financial assistance given by the Chinese government and banks, this dream was translated into reality.

The objectives of the plan were:

- (1) To make China industrially self-sufficient, despite Japanese blockade and infiltration of Japanese-manufactured goods through the occupied territory, and without employing big machinery which could not be imported.
- (2) To develop the larger industrial centres in the interior that should be safe from Japanese bombs and smaller mobile centres in threatened areas that could be evacuated at short notice.
- (3) To provide a decent living to the millions of refugees, war orphans and widows, and disabled soldiers.

At the back of the mind of Rewi Alley and his associates, however, was a greater objective which they hoped to secure by the development of rural co-operative industry. They hoped that experience of co-operation in their daily tasks would give the people an excellent education in democracy, make them more self-reliant and enterprising, both willing and able to resist the aggressor as conscious patriots with a definite conception of their responsibilities as citizens of the Chinese Republic.

The Indian doctors had an ample opportunity to get familiar with Rewi Alley, the man and his work, as he travelled with them when they set out from Chungking for Yen-an. In June, 1938, he had organized the headquarters of the Industrial co-operatives in Hankow and "assisted in arranging the removal of industry up the Yangtze",\* some months before the doctors arrived there. In August he "took a thousand refugees and some machinery by train to the far Northwest, where they set up the Northwest Headquarters." Since then he had been to Canton to negotiate a loan for the Co-operatives, to Kiangsi to establish the Southeast Headquarters, to Hunan and Kwangsi to start branches there, dodged Japanese bombs on several occasions, and returned to Chungking towards the end of December. Now, in company with the Indian medical unit, he was on his way to the Northwest again !

Rewi Alley proved an ideal travel companion as they all left Chungking in an ambulance car, with their baggage and medical supplies in an ambulance truck. He speaks every single dialect of China and, therefore, was of invaluable help in giving instructions to the drivers, tackling the ferry boat-men and generally making things easy and comfortable on the way.

Before leaving Chungking it had been impressed upon the Indian doctors that there were three dangers in a journey to Yen-an :—

- (1) The road was bad, at places almost no road!
- (2) The road was being constantly bombed by the enemy.
- (3) If Sian which was threatend was occupied by the Japanese, they would be left in Yen-an, cut off not only from India but even from Chungking.

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\* China Builds For Democracy.

But it was Yen-an where the fighting was fiercest. It was in Yen-an that they needed medical help most. It was in Yen-an that the indomitable Eighth Route Army and the 'Red' guerillas operated. So, it was Yen-an that they were determined to go, come what may !

From Chungking to Naikiang where they met Doctor Kotnis' friend, Dr. Huang, the Government Sugar Technologist, who had been to India on a study tour. Beyond Naikiang is sugarcane country. Along the road one sees terraced hills with sugarcane plantations and rice fields. This is one of the most fertile regions in China. Yet the poverty of the peasants is appalling. It is only the landlord who gets the benefit of nature's bounty.

Chengt'u, which they reached after two days of tiring journey, is the capital of the Szechuan province. A walled old city, with dirty and narrow lanes, it has a population of nearly 200,000. Outside the city is the fine 'campus' of the West China University which is the new consolidation of several colleges and universities from the coastal cities, including the Nanking University, an American missionary institution. To this remote place on the border of Tibet have migrated several thousand students and professors with their libraries and laboratories. Many of them had to walk hundreds of miles to get here.

The doctors had to stop in Chengtu for four days, while Rewi Alley busied himself in inspecting the newly started local co-operatives which specialised mainly in spinning and weaving. The weather was getting unbearably cold and the men from India had to get more warm clothing made including fur coats.

Leaving Chengtu, they rolled over a road that was becoming worse and worse, with perilous hair-pin ends. The ice-cold wind stung viciously and even double pairs of woolen gloves could not

keep the hands warm. They spent the night in the roofless hut of a poor and ignorant but very hospitable peasant who had never heard of India. When Rewi Alley explained to him that India was the country where Buddha was born, he refused to believe it, insisting that the great Gautam was hundred per cent Chinese!

Next day, while the weather became colder and colder and the road worse and worse, they crossed the border of Szechuan and entered the Shensi province. On the road they passed camels laden with cotton-bales. The road-signs were written in Chinese and Russian languages. They soon found out the reason when they saw Russian trucks coming from the opposite direction, loaded with petrol, medical supplies and other goods.

They spent the night in Hanchung, a historic walled city, which was once the capital of the Han emperors. Here also several co-operatives had been started and arrangements were being made to start more.

In Siao-suifu, they saw one of the most remarkable of Rewi Alley's co-operatives. While at other places, the co-ops were producing cloth, blankets, leather goods, or simple machinery for weaving and spinning, here was a co-operative arsenal producing machine guns and rifles for the Chinese army. It was very much like one of the rifle factories of the Indian Northwest Frontier tribal area. This region is populated mostly by Muslims who are indistinguishable from the other Chinese either in their dress or speech. The co-operative workers gave a dinner to the doctors and asked many questions about India.

At every co-operative depot or factory they visited, it was amazing to see the success this venture had achieved within a few months. The co-op workers were hard-working, looked intelligent and self-reliant, were relatively cleaner than the other poor

Chinese, and they were all imbued with a patriotic spirit. Each centre of co-operative industry was also a centre of social regeneration and round it arose, on the workers' own spontaneous enterprise, such community institutions as libraries, schools and hospitals.

On the walls of Indusco factories and depots were to be seen such slogans as:

Industrial co-operatives are *really* the workers' shops !

Industrial co-operatives are the method of boycotting Japan !

Cleanliness is health and good health means better work !

In our society only those who work shall eat !

If we are bombed once we will rebuild once. If we are bombed ten times we will rebuild ten times.\*

Paochi, a small town on the terminus of the Lunghai railway, was being organised as the Northwest Headquarters of the C. I. C. Already co-operatives had been established there to make shoes, uniforms, soap, cloth, blankets, etc. The C. I. C. had its own stores, schools, training classes and a club house. Thanks to the interest taken by Mr. Wang Feng-jui, the very enlightened Magistrate, the co-operative enterprises were flourishing in the city. Paochi has rightly come to be known as Kung-Ho Ch'eng. Indusco City ! Wang is from Manchuria which he left after the Japanese invasion and is very bitterly anti-Japanese, his slogan for all Manchurians being, "Fight Back To Our Old Country". Wang took a keen interest in the Indian doctors, gave a dinner in their honour and organised a mass meeting for them, attended by nearly 5000, mostly soldiers and Indusco workers. As this

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\*"Battle For Asia."

also is a Muslim area, Atal quoted the Holy Quran in his speech and commended the patriotic spirit of Chinese Muslims.

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In Paochi they discovered that their petrol supply had been exhausted and, therefore, leaving their cars behind they took the train for Sian. This is one of the few strips of railway line left in Chinese hands but they found the carriages very comfortably upholstered—except for the bullet-holes! By the evening they were in Sian, the capital of the Shensi province, which they found humming with military activity.

Sian hit the headlines of the world press in 1937. And it will go down in the history of China because it was here that the Generalissimo yielded to "military persuasion" and promised to start resisting Japan and to stop his war upon the Chinese 'Reds'. It was in the Sian Guest House (where the Indian doctors stayed) that practically the entire General Staff of Chiang Kai-Shek's army was made prisoner in the Young Marshal, Chang Hsueh-liang's historic coup which resulted in the end of the long-standing Kuomintang—Communist feud and the inauguration of the United Front against Japan.

The Eighth Route Army maintained a liaison office in Sian because it was from here that one took the road to Yen-an and the guerilla front in the north. Here the doctors met Lin Pai-chu, the chairman of the Border Region Government—tall, white-haired yet good-looking, who was on his way to Chungking. A veteran revolutionary and an old comrade of Sun Yat-sen, he was one of the founders of the Kuomintang and one of the most important men in the party until 1927 when he broke with the Generalissimo, fled to Kiangsi and joined the Communists. To-



day he is one of the key-men who hold the United Front together, wielding influence on both the sides. While continuing to hold a venerable position among the Communists, yet recently he has been reinstated as a member of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang!

Lin Pai-chu explained to the doctors the historical significance of the Eighth Route Army. He said in effect: "The Eighth Route Army to-day is an army of the Central Government fighting the Japanese under the supreme command of the Generalissimo. But there is this difference. It is an army fighting not only for the liberation of China but of all oppressed nations, especially the oppressed nations of the East. It is, therefore, an enemy of all imperialisms. In this sense, you can even call the Eighth Route Army an army of the Indian people."

At the Sian headquarters of the Eighth Route Army a meeting was held to welcome the Indian medical unit. The function took place in the "National Salvation Room" (which, before the United Front, used to be known as the "Lenin Corner"). Doctor Atal gave a speech tracing the history of the Indian freedom movement. The speeches were followed by songs, the Indians being forced to sing their own. Among the Chinese songs there was one, specially composed by a young poet, welcoming the Indian doctors. An anti-Japanese guerilla song which someone translated for them ran something like this:

We have nothing to eat  
But still we'll fight the Japs.  
We have nowhere to sleep  
But still we'll fight the Japs.

The function ended with a rifle dance, virile and exciting like the war dances of the Frontier *Afridis*, which reached a climax with the symbolic killing of a Japanese soldier!

Amusing Sidelight : On the several occasions when they met Lin Pai-chu, the doctors were impressed with the smart appearance, handsome looks and intelligent talk of his young secretary in the uniform of the Eighth Route Army, who spoke perfect English and several times acted as their interpreter. It was weeks later in Yen-an that they learnt that he was not a boy but a girl.

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Rewi Alley had to go to Paochi and to bring petrol from there before they could start for Yen-an. Meanwhile, there were a few air-raids which by now had assumed a normal aspect. They went on an excursion to Lintung, 50 kilometres from Sian, where a tablet fixed on a hill marks the exact spot where Chiang Kai-Shek was "captured" during the "Sian Incident". Also they met several doctors who had been to Yen-an, including Miss C. C. Chiang, a Lady doctor in uniform, and Dr. Brown, a Canadian missionary doctor, from whom they got a rough idea of the difficulties they would have to face up north ! Finally, it was only on February 10 that they could leave for Yen-an in an Eighth Route Army truck.

If Chengtu had been cold and Sian colder, the snow-covered hills of Shensi proved the coldest ! Even the roadside was white with snow and telegraph wires were festooned with snowflakes. On the way they saw an overturned truck which had been bringing Russian-manufactured medicines and first aid material for the Eighth Route Army from sympathisers in Sinkiang. At Lochuan, the border city on the Central Government side, they slept in a military school, and woke up to find the water in their water-bottles frozen. The truck would not start and boiling water had to be poured in the radiator which, overnight, had turned into a refrigerator !

In a few hours they were in the plateau land of the 'Red' area. The villages they passed looked poor but alive with a new spirit. There were slogans painted on the walls and posters with pictures of Chiang Kai-Shek, Mao Tse-Tung and Chu-Teh. By nightfall they reached the gates of the most thoroughly blitzed city in the world just as another flock of Japanese planes appeared overhead to drop their bombs on the ruins which have already been blown to smithereens. Calmly, as if it was the natural thing for them to do, they left the trucks and took shelter in the snow-covered trenches. It was a strange—but highly significant—welcome to Yen-an.

## WITH THE 'REDS' IN YENAN

*"The road to Yen-an is for China's youth the road to life."*

—LO HSUN

FROM February 12 to November 4, 1939, the Indian medical unit spent about nine months in Yen-an.

It was for them one of the most important and eventful phases of their stay in China. They learnt much about the secret of China's dogged resistance against Japan, they came in close personal contact with the leaders of the indomitable 'Reds' of China, including the almost legendary figure of Mao Tse-Tung, and had opportunities of watching at close range the processes by which a democratic political administration and a people's culture are being forged on the anvil of war. All this time they lived in caves dug into hill-sides, as did every one else in Yen-an, and by the time they left they had got so used to the burrowing badger's way of life that they would have found it difficult to sleep in an ordinary room with windows opening out on all four sides!

Also these nine months saw the break-up of their team. In May, old Doctor Cholkar left for India as his constitution could not bear the extreme cold weather. Two months later Mukerji developed acute kidney trouble and was advised to go to Hong Kong for an operation. While he was in Hong Kong, war was declared and finding both the air and land routes from Hong Kong to the interior impossible, he came to India hoping to return via the Burma Road. In India he collected more medical supplies to take to China but he was arrested in Rangoon by the British police for an unspecified offence and sent back to India. His supplies were confiscated and one still does not know what happened to them or why a doctor trying to render medical help

to the Chinese people was suspected and penalised! Anyway, on November 4, when the Mission left Yen-an for the war front, there were only three, instead of five, doctors in the party.

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Professionally, they found a great deal of work to do in Yen-an. Soon after their arrival they were asked to go round the hospitals, T. B. sanatorium and Medical College, and to report on the conditions they found and how they could be improved. Things were in a pretty mess, there were neither enough doctors nor materials, the bed linen was generally dirty, and surgery had to be done by very crude methods because the necessary appliances were not available. The Indian unit turned over to the Eighth Route Army all the medical supplies they had brought with them and which were distributed to the hospitals that sorely needed them. The suggestions they made for the improvement of the medical service in general were immediately adopted. At the same time a new hospital with 200 beds, mostly for the war-wounded received from the front, known as the "Eighth Route Army Model Hospital" was started for the Indian doctors to run it as an exemplary institution so that the other hospitals could emulate their reformed organisation and system of work. This hospital was situated—in caves, of course!—15 miles from the city and Doctors Atal, Kotnis and Basu lived there for hospital duty.

Doctors Cholkar and Mukerji, on the other hand, were asked to do teaching work (through an interpreter) in the Medical College which was situated in the hills at a distance of 80 miles from Yen-an and could be reached only by driving part of the way in a car, covering some distance on horseback and, finally, walking the last stage of the journey on foot!

The hospital routine was simple but fairly rigorous. Immediately after breakfast they would take a round of the wards

(which were all in caves!) and prescribe treatment for the indoor patients. All operations were performed at noon time as then the light in the "operation theatre" cave was brightest. After lunch they took a little rest, reading medical or political books and journals. In the afternoon they attended the out-patients' department which soon became very popular and people came walking from long distances to be treated by the Indian doctors.

The Medical School, only recently raised to the status of a college, dates back to the days of the civil war when the 'Red' Army was engaged in a continuous struggle against the Central Government armies. When the Communists were forced to undertake their historic Long March of 6000 miles from Kiangsi to Shansi, the School functioned throughout the eleven months that the Army was on the move, lectures were given and classes held even while marching, and during this period two batches were actually graduated!

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Never before had they seen or even heard of a place like Yen-an. The old city proper had so repeatedly been bombed that not a single building remained intact within the surrounding city walls. Not a soul lived there, the entire city had been evacuated. And yet the Japanese continued to waste their precious bombs by dropping them over and over again on the same ruins and debris. It was like flogging a dead horse. On one occasion after the Japanese had dropped several hundred tons of bombs the only casualty was one poor donkey!

All round the old and ruined city, innumerable caves, tiers upon tiers, had been dug in the side of the hills, with a few brick houses built in naturally safe places, either protected by an over-

hanging cliff or in the narrow hollow formed between two steep slopes of the hills. Here lived nearly 40,000 people in what was undoubtedly the strangest metropolis in the world. From these caves was directed the endless series of nuisance campaigns against the Japanese forces of occupation, this was the base of operations for the Eighth Route Army. It was also the political and administrative centre of what has been described as the "guerilla empire" of north China, a strange collection of more or less independent administrations known as the Border Regions Governments.

What are these "Border Regions"? "The unique system", says Edgar Snow, "grew out of the regional peculiarities of North China and the conditions imposed by the war."\* It is necessary to recall that before the Sian Incident brought together the Chinese Communists and the Central Government, a republic run on the Soviet model existed in this area. As a part of the settlement the Communists agreed to abolish their independent state and let their territory be again a part of the central republic. But the Red Army (now incorporated in the Central Government forces as the "Eighth Route Army") was left in control of the area which extended over the three provinces of Shansi, Kansu and Ninghsia. A special administration was set up, called the Shansi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Government which was not a socialist state but a democracy with adult suffrage and elected institutions of government. The leaders were mostly Communists but a united front was carefully maintained by reserving one third seats in the Parliament for Communists, one third for the Kuomintang and one third for non-Party members.

Yenan was the capital of this administration and of the large area (almost the size of England) ruled from here, quite a sub-

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\* "Battle For Asia."

stantial part was behind the Japanese lines. And it was interesting and edifying to find that even in those areas that Japan has proclaimed to the world as having been completely conquered, the Japanese power seldom extended beyond the garrisoned towns and villages and the heavily guarded railway lines. The Japanese might have conquered the territory but it is the Border Government that rules and whose rule is acknowledged by the people.

Besides the Shansi-Kansu-Ninghsia, there are other Border Governments as well, all situated in guerilla areas. Shansi-Hopei-Chahar covers territory, around the intersection of these three provinces, which was actually recovered from the Japanese and from the Japanese-controlled puppet regime by the Eighth Route Army. A third border region is situated in Northern Shantung, also in territory won back from the invaders. The influence of Yen-an is predominant in all these three areas and more democratic and somewhat socialistic administrations have been set up to mobilize the people against the Japanese on a voluntary mass basis.

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The most important man in 'Red' China is Mao Tse-Tung, the chairman of the former Soviet Government in North China and the Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party. The doctors had heard and read a good deal about him before they came to Yen-an and were anxious to meet him as soon as possible. On the day following their arrival, he and the other Communist leaders were present at the meeting held to welcome the Indian Mission. It was difficult to recognize him as he was dressed in the same plain uniform as his soldiers wore. But someone pointed him out—a lean figure and weather-beaten face. The only thing that distinguished him was his stature. He was the tallest among all the Chinese present there !\*

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\* Edgar Snow, in his "Red Star Over China," describes him as "a gaunt, rather Lincoln-esque figure, above average height for a Chinese, somewhat stooped, with a head of thick black hair grown very long, and with large, searching eyes, a high bridged nose and prominent cheekbones..... an intellectual face of great shrewdness."



Some days later they met him in the bombed city in a large room that had miraculously escaped destruction and which was used by Mao for reception of guests. There was no furniture except plain chairs and a few rickety tables. He greeted them with a big smile and talked to them through an interpreter. They found him keenly interested in India and Indian politics and he asked them many questions about the Congress, Indian Communists, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. In the Indian papers which they had received the doctors had read Tagore's famous correspondence with Noguchi, the Japanese poet, in which the sage of Shantiniketan had completely exposed and condemned the Imperialist and aggressive character of Japan, and why Indians could never have any sympathy with such a country. They presented some of these papers to Mao who can read English a little though he does not speak it.

He invited them to share his simple meal and at the dining table he proved an excellent host, regaling his guests with a number of humorous anecdotes. He likes very spicy food and keeps red chilly powder on the table to sprinkle on the meat and the vegetables. In his peculiar humorous vein he suggested that one of the bonds of Indo-Chinese unity was the love both Indians and Chinese had for red chillies!

Later they had frequent occasions to meet him and they were impressed by his intelligence, simplicity and homely sense of humour. Once when Doctor Atal broke one of his ribs in a riding accident and soon after, Basu fell down when the horse slipped on a rainy day, Mao pointed to his legs and said, "These 'horses' are the best. They carry me wherever I want to go and never let me down."

In August they were all overjoyed to receive a telegram from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru saying that he was coming to China in the third week and would very much like to come to Yen-an to be able to meet the Indian unit and see them at work as well as to meet Mao Tse-Tung and Chu-Teh.

The news created a sensation and a wave of enthusiasm in Yen-an. Mao sent a telegram of welcome and a big Reception Committee was immediately formed to arrange the programme of his stay in Yen-an. A special cave was white-washed and kept ready for him. Mukerji, who was then on the way to Hong Kong for the operation, met Nehru on arrival in Chungking.\* He even started by plane for Yen-an but by the time he reached Chengtu he received news that war had broken out in Europe and he was immediately recalled to India, thus causing great disappointment to everyone in Yen-an.

The doctors still remember that for six days they were not aware of World War II. It was on September 1 that Hitler's hordes crossed the border into Poland but it was September 7 when a courier from Yen-an brought the news to their "Model Hospital."

At about the same time Edgar Snow arrived in Yen-an and the doctors met him at a dinner given by Mao. Among others present were a few Kuomintang Generals and officials and some Russian advisers. The topic of conversation was the war and Mao

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\* "The plane landed on a sandbank in the middle of the river. Many eminent persons had gathered there, headed by some high officers of the army and Dr. Chu who had sent me the wireless message. As I descended, the pleasant and familiar sound of *Bande Mataram* greeted my ears, and looking up in some surprise, I saw an Indian in uniform. He was Mukerji of our Congress Medical Unit." (China, Spain and War).

told the Indians that he had picked up a radio report to the effect that the Indian National Congress had demanded a clarification of Britain's war aims with particular reference to India's independence.

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One of the most remarkable institutions they saw in Yen-an was the Anti-Japanese University which is housed in caves dug by students themselves a few miles from the city. Here 2000 students were receiving education in 1939 and another 8000 attended the branches in other Border Regions. Originally called the 'Red Academy' (in the Chinese Soviet days) when it was a centre of ideological and theoretical education of party members, now it has been given the full name of "Anti-Japanese Military and Political University." The course consisted of six months intensive political and military training. Those who took the political course had to learn a little about military theory and organisation also, and those who took the military course had to devote some time to a study of politics. The graduates joined the Eighth Route Army either as officers or Political Commissars, depending upon which of the two courses they had taken.

To this strange centre of learning came students from all over China. Some of them had had to walk hundreds of miles to get there. Many had defied their parents and, in some cases, given up a comfortable life. Not only students but writers, artists, scholars, with leftist sympathies, came to Yen-an and became a part of its vital cultural atmosphere.

One of the manifestations of this developing cultural activity was the 'People's Theatre'—progressive, purposeful, propagandist and yet rooted in Chinese tradition—that was making steady

headway in Yen-an. During their stay, the doctors saw a number of such performances—including the one *about themselves*.

It was a short play staged by the students on the day following their arrival in Yen-an. The scenes depicted Indian doctors and Chinese nurses working together to save Chinese lives at the front. It was amusing for them to see, however, their counter-parts on the stage with huge black beards. The popular conception of Indians in Chinese minds is based on their experience of the Sikh policemen and watchmen in the British concessions at Shanghai, Tientsin, Canton and Hankow who are the only Indians the average Chinese ever does see!

In Yen-an every evening there was some entertainment or the other. One day they saw the "Collaboration Dance" danced by school children, some dressed in Red (to symbolize the Communists) and others in Blue (to symbolize the Kuomintang). Another dance had "Welcome to Our Indian Friends" as its theme. The dances which are a combination of Chinese and European styles lack the rhythm and graceful movements of Indian dancing. But they were certainly a very interesting object lesson in the utilisation of an important art medium for the political education of the common people. Even the old-style "Peiping Opera" has been re-shaped to do anti-Japanese propaganda and the new operas glorify patriotic deeds of legendary or historical heroes of China.

The Eighth Route Army maintains a number of "Drama Squads" which perform patriotic plays before the soldiers, and before the peasants in the villages, thus constantly ensuring a high degree of the people's morale.

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Sidelights on Yen-an—

General Chou En-lai broke his right arm in a riding accident and called the Indian doctors. He would not get himself treated by anyone else. When they reached his cave they found him busy practising to be able to write with his left hand.

It is difficult to distinguish between men and women in Yen-an as practically everyone wears the same uniform.

Many air-raids took place during their stay and sometimes they could see from their caves bombs falling on the already devastated city. Some of the bombs proved to be 'dud', they would not explode. So the workers of the blacksmiths' co-operative collect all the metal and chemicals to be found in an unexploded bomb.

Doctor Atal who includes exceptional culinary skill among his many other qualities would often prepare Indian dishes in his cave and became so famous that people would come long distances and ask for an Indian feast !

One day the doctors went for a walk and strayed into a village. They were surprised to see men with spears, swords, old-fashioned guns, etc., shouting and advancing towards them. They were "arrested", taken to the village, given tea and released only after a telephone call had been put through to the Headquarters and their identity had been established. Later it was explained that they had been suspected of being Japanese or Japanese spies because of their good uniforms and were arrested by the "Self-Defence Corps" of the village. These Corps have been started with the idea of self-help as the basis of national defence. Each village is organised and armed for resistance. That is why Japan can never win through in China and, on the other hand, has been constantly losing parts of the conquered territory in North China to guerilla bands.

## THE GUERILLAS STRIKE AT NIGHT !

*"What are we fighting for?"*

*"Defending our country."*

*"How old is our country?"*

*"Four thousand years."*

*"What are we fighting against?"*

*"Japanese Imperialism."*

*"What must we do when the enemy retreat?"*

*"Attack."*

*"When only must we attack?"*

*"By surprise and with superior numbers."*

*"What is our most important principle?"*

*"Co-operate with the people."*

*—Chinese guerillas' catechism quoted in  
Lin Yutang's novel, "A LEAF IN THE  
STORM."*

DOCTORS Cholkar and Mukerji, having already returned to India, it was a depleted Indian medical unit that set out from Yen-an when the summons for them came from General Chu Teh, the Commander-in-Chief of the Eighth Route Army, who had his headquarters in a village near Wusiang in Southwest Shansi. There had been heavy casualties on that front and doctors and medical supplies were urgently needed.

Before leaving Yen-an, the three doctors—Atal, Kotnis and Basu—had been frankly told that the journey to the front would be a dangerous undertaking as more than once they would have to cross the enemy lines. Yet they were undaunted, feeling more and more identified with the cause of the Chinese patriots and willing to share any risks with their comrades. By now they had

learnt to speak Chinese, Kotnis even more fluently than Atal and Basu, and no longer felt strangers in the country. With their Chinese names they had acquired virtual citizenship of China. They were now An Teh Hua, Kho Teh Hua and Ba Ssu Hua, three frontline doctors of China's army of resistance.

Wusiang is due east from Yen-an, about 300 miles as the crow flies. In ordinary circumstances they ought to have taken not more than a week to reach there. But actually they were on the move for over six weeks. To circumvent the intervening enemy-occupied territory they had to take a tortuous complicated route, first going south as far as Sian, then east, then north, thus traversing three sides of a rectangle instead of following one straight line.

All the same it was an exciting trip. When they left Yen-an, they had an interesting assortment of fellow-passengers. There was a German (anti-Nazi) doctor, Muller, two Japanese prisoners of war and the Chinese captain in charge of them, and 20 Eighth Route Army soldiers to act as armed escort. The Japanese captives were not kept bound or chained. But for the fact that the escort kept a vigilant eye on their movements, they were quite free to do anything—except to escape! This was the first time the Indians had seen Japanese prisoners and through an interpreter they asked them many questions. It was edifying to find that these scape-goats of the Japanese militarists knew very little about the issues involved in the war and had no idea whatsoever why they were fighting the Chinese except that they were obeying the command of the Emperor.

From Yen-an to Sian by truck and then by train eastwards. In Sian they met some Austrian and Czech anti-Fascist doctors who had worked with the International Brigade in Spain and had now volunteered to work for the Eighth Route Army. It was

also in Sian that they heard of the tragic circumstances of the death of Doctor Bethune, the Canadian surgeon who had been working in the guerilla area. He had to operate in an emergency without the surgical rubber gloves, one of his fingers which had a scratch had got septic and blood-poisoning had proved fatal. He had been a gallant and fearless man, a real humanitarian who wished to serve mankind without prejudices of race, colour or creed, and the Eighth Route Army was raising a memorial in his honour.

From Sian the train took them as far as Tungkwan but here it was learnt that further railway traffic had been suspended as the Japanese were in the vicinity and passing trains were liable to be shelled and fired at, if not entirely captured by the enemy. So they were told they must ride on horseback, making an 80 mile detour behind a hill, to Wensiang from where they could complete their journey in another train. The horses, however, proved so slow that by the time they reached Wensiang the train had already left. They spent the night in a wagon full of wheat and even the disturbing thought that they were only a dozen miles or so from a Japanese garrison could not keep them awake after the tiring cross-country ride. When they woke up, however, they found themselves half-buried in wheat. As they slept the wagons had been shunted and the jolts and jerks had brought an avalanche of grain crashing about their heads.

Next day, through fog and rain and snow, the train made its way to Mienchi where they had to leave the warm wheat wagon and start on their long trek in a temperature below freezing point. But the training they had given themselves in Ichang stood them well as they clambered up the hill track, followed by mules carrying their baggage and supplies. The Eighth Route Army maintained an excellent communications system in this area and every few



miles there was an army post guarded by 15 to 20 soldiers. It was thus that the army units kept in touch not only with each other and with the rear, but also with the guerilla bands operating in this area.

Beyond Mienchih they crossed the Yellow River by ferry-boat and on the other bank they observed two contrasting phenomena—one depressing and pathetic, the other extremely inspiring.

Wounded soldiers belonging to the Central Government armies on their way back to the base hospitals presented a pathetic spectacle. Like those others the doctors had seen a year earlier on the "Highway of Hell" near Hankow, these too looked emaciated, ill-clad, starved. An emergency clinic and dressing-station was set up by the road-side and the Indian unit gave medical treatment to many of them. Even more depressing was to see the signs of senseless and brutal violence and destruction in the villages that only recently had been recaptured from the Japanese. Almost all the buildings were burnt down, the people had all fled to the hills or been shot by the invaders. Human skeletons and bones lay scattered in village squares, walls bore marks of machine-gun fire where whole batches of Chinese peasants had been shot.

Also they met, however, a group of about 30 students returning from the frontline area. They belonged to the propaganda units of the Eighth Route Army, all in uniform, both boys and girls of ages ranging from 18 to 25. They had with them portable stage equipment, simple musical instruments like drums, mouth-organs and a Chinese version of the Indian *Ek-tara*, one big box for costumes required for their plays and gas lights to give shows

at night. And they carried everything, including their beddings, on their backs. They were returning after a three months tour, walking from village to village, and looked exhausted but cheerful.

In a village on the bank of the Yellow River they gave a show for about 300 people including the Indian doctors. A Buddhist temple served as a stage and the audience sat in the courtyard. The entire programme was dedicated to the Indian Medical Unit and it was surprising to find that within a few hours the student-artists had been able to write, rehearse and stage a short symbolic play depicting the anti-Imperialist struggle of India and the unity of Indian and Chinese people in their fight for freedom. There were songs and speeches, and "reportage" done in a novel and highly interesting manner. The latest news of important events—e.g. Chinese victories against the invaders—were rendered into verse and then, ballad-like, sung to the accompaniment of a drum. From the applause that greeted each item, it was obvious that the villagers liked this kind of entertainment and its propaganda value was tremendous.

As they travelled northwards to General Chu Teh's headquarters they had ample opportunities of seeing the Chinese guerillas in action. In one village they met "Commander" Tiang Se Ling, a famous guerilla leader. A little thin man of about 40, he looked very unlike the popular conception of a warrior, notwithstanding his uniform and the revolver in his belt. All through the night he talked (through an interpreter) to the Indian doctors, telling them how he, a peaceful simple peasant, organized all the peasants of his village and gave them military training. At first they had no arms. So he led surprise night attacks on isolated Japanese garrisons and supply convoys, and thus secured more than sufficient arms for his guerilla band. He told them how these

night attacks were planned, how his spies brought detailed information about the movements of enemy troops, how they destroyed all motor roads and sometimes built new roads overnight to lead the Japanese columns into an ambush.

The doctors had been provided with mules to ride but in this region it was so bitterly cold that they preferred every now and then to get down and walk as that helped them to keep warm. As they went along mountain tracks, uphill, downhill, they noticed that the mules' hoofs produced a metallic sound as they struck the ground. And the stones, when picked up, proved to be extremely heavy. The explanation was that these mountains are full of metals, especially iron ore. Sometimes the peasants can just pick big pieces of ore and take them to the village smithy. Of coal, too, there is no dearth. Every village has its own exclusive coal "mine", dug like a well. And the coal is of excellent quality. It has been said that the iron and coal deposits in the Shansi province can supply the whole world for a hundred years!\*

That is why the Japanese were so keen to take this area if only the guerillas would let them have it!

Before finally reaching the Headquarters of General Chu Teh, they had to cross the Japanese lines at night. At no time is it an easy process but the guerillas and the Eighth Route Army men have perfected their own technique of doing so. During the day while resting in one of the frontline villages, the doctors were invited to have a look at the dangerous ground they would have to traverse at night. They were led to the top of a hill from where, lying on the ground, they could have a good view of the valley below. It was a broad valley and through binoculars they could

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\* According to Nym Wales, the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives are now carrying on extensive mining and smelting operations in this area.

see the ribbon of the motor road zig-zagging across it. Over the road were passing army trucks. *Japanese* army trucks! The guerillas pointed out two villages to them, about a mile apart, both of which were guarded by enemy garrisons. There were 50 Japanese soldiers in one of them, 150 in the other! (All this information had been brought by the scouts who, at considerable risk, are continuously sneaking in and out of the enemy lines to keep the guerillas informed about enemy movements and dispositions). From far below came the booming sound of artillery fire. The Japanese garrison was shelling the ravines behind which was a Chinese regimental company. The futility of it was obvious but the Japs, it seemed, were in a habit of firing their big guns whenever they were scared!

It was explained to the doctors that at night the two garrisons would be attacked by the guerillas *from the outside* and while the Japanese were thus engaged, their party would safely cross over between the two villages. It sounded a faultless scheme—but would it work so easily as all that?

The guerillas strike at night! No horses are allowed as their hoofs clatter on the hard ground and absolute silence is of the essence of such operations. The doctors' luggage and medical supplies were shouldered by peasant volunteers. Two regular companies (each of about 120) were got ready, one to attack each village. One of these was properly armed with rifles but the other was a company of peasant irregulars, armed only with hand grenades, besides spears, spades, carpenter's saws or anything else one could find in the village! At the foot of the valley they waited for the moon to go down. There was snow on the ground and it was not difficult to see one's way even by starlight. Midnight was the Zero Hour. The two companies bifurcated. Soon after

one could hear exchanges of shots both to one's left and to one's right. The garrisons were being attacked. This was the moment they had been waiting for. Swiftly the whole group picked its way across the No Man's Land between the two villages. Every one was silent and tense and had a peculiar feeling. *Crossing the enemy lines!* Until then it had been just a phrase. In those anxious moments it became a reality.

Across the white motor road and once again they felt a sense of comparative safety. But the adventure was not over yet. Their old peasant guide became nervous and lost the way and the whole night they walked and walked, climbing over two hills, but in the excitement they forgot to feel tired. By the time they reached the Regimental Headquarters at 9 a. m. they had walked 30 miles. Once they were among friends and could spread their legs on the floor in a mud hut, the accumulated feeling of tiredness came over them like an overwhelming flood and in a few minutes they were fast asleep. They slept through the whole day and did not even know that the village had been heavily shelled in the afternoon and orders had been given for everyone to be ready to march!

## THE NEW GREAT WALL!

*"His name is already immortalised among those who have fought for human freedom in China."*

—EDGAR SNOW, *writing about Chu Teh.*

*"The greatest lesson we have learned is that a people can fight victoriously with what resources it happens to have."*

—GENERAL CHU TEH.

A mud hut in an obscure little village near Wusiang in South-eastern Shansi in North China. Outside, peasant women were milling wheat. Not far a few horses were tethered. As the three Indian doctors, on the way to see General Chu Teh, the Commander of the Eighth Route Army, approached the hut they saw an oldish man with a big head, wrinkled and weather-beaten face and thick lips, welcoming them with a broad smile. He wore the familiar uniform and they took him to be the rather shabbily-dressed orderly of the General. When they went in they found he was none else but the great Chu Teh himself!

The Headquarters of the Commander of the Eighth Route Army were established in a room borrowed from a peasant. The walls were covered with maps—maps of North China, China, Asia and the world—all profusely marked. Half the room was filled with a *Kang* (the mud sleeping-platform built over a stove), a few chairs, a small table and a crude oil lamp completed the list of furniture. In these modest surroundings they met the man who had held half the invading armies of Japan at bay in North China for three years. Considering the poor equipment of his Eighth Route Army, this was nothing less than a miracle.\*

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\* "The uniqueness of his (Chu Teh's) career is this: that this scion of a family of landlords, rising to power and luxury and dissipation while still young, was nevertheless able, when past middle age, to discard the degenerate environment of his youth, to break, by a superb act of human will, a life-long addiction to narcotics, and finally even to forsake his family, and to devote his entire fortune to a revolutionary ideal which he believed to animate the highest cause and purpose of his time." EDGAR SNOW in *"Red Star Over China."*

Talking to Chu Teh through an interpreter, the doctors were able to understand how this miracle was achieved. He spoke of the value of guerilla warfare for colonial people as a means of achieving national liberation against the overwhelming armed might of imperialism. He explained how guerilla tactics could be pursued not only in hills and mountains but even in plains. "We make mountains of men," he said and described in detail the strategy of deep labyrinthine trenches zig-zagging across the country-side, providing safety to the Chinese irregulars and death to the unwary Japs.

Personally, Chu Teh struck them as sincere, passionate but very patient, almost fatherly in his calm dignity. They saw him on many occasions later but never saw him angry, impatient or impolite to the humblest of his soldiers.

A few days after their arrival, on January 1, 1940, the Indian doctors attended a meeting which was held to welcome them and to celebrate Chu Teh's 56th birthday. The Red Commander proved a powerful orator and chose as the theme of his speech: the future of India, China and the Soviet Union!

Before being assigned their medical jobs, the doctors were asked to get familiar with the administration of the various departments of the Eighth Route Army. The heads of departments came and talked to them. They were most impressed by the Education Department which is responsible for the hundred per cent literacy in the ranks of the Eighth Route Army. The soldiers are not only taught to read and write but to think for themselves—a remarkable thing for any army!—and whenever they get a brief respite from fighting, meetings are held to discuss local, national and international problems. Every company has a club room and a library, and runs a cyclostyled newspaper. When the army marches to the battlefield, the soldiers carry their books along with

them. The result is a phenomenal political consciousness among the soldiers who are not only good fighters but know definitely what they are fighting for. The present Eighth Route Army, in this respect, is only carrying forward the tradition of political training given in the old Red Army days but the emphasis naturally has been shifted from class conflict to national solidarity in the anti-Japanese war.

Another interesting and significant department, known as "Enemy Work Department", carries on propaganda among the Japanese soldiers and captured prisoners. In each squad (of ten) of the 8th Route Army, at least one man must know the Japanese language so that at the time of encountering the enemy he can shout slogans in Japanese. At first the Japanese soldiers seldom surrendered because their officers had taught them that, if taken prisoner, they would be killed in any case. Now the 8th Route Army attacks the enemy not only with machine guns and rifles but also with slogans and songs, asking the Japanese soldiers to desert and come over to the Chinese side where they would be treated as Comrades. Hundreds of them have thus voluntarily surrendered and been ideologically "re-conditioned" by the "Enemy Work Department." Not a few of them have joined the 8th Route Army and help to distribute propaganda literature among their ex-Comrades. The doctors met some of these anti-Fascist Japanese and were impressed by their zeal for the democratic cause and their open hatred for the Imperialist-militarist-capitalist class that rules their country. It was noticed, however, that while the ordinary Japanese soldier (usually recruited from the peasant class) can be weaned away from his early fanaticism, the captured officers prove a hard nut to crack and are hardly ever converted to an anti-Imperialist and democratic view-point.



After two weeks of rest and general 'look round', the doctors were set to work. The wards of the military hospitals were peasant huts in different villages scattered about the countryside, with a central village serving as the medical headquarters where operations were performed and medicines prepared and stored. The doctors had to walk from village to village, examining their patients who were mostly military casualties, and in the extreme cold of North China it was not a very pleasant experience. The food they shared with their 8th Route Army colleagues was coarse and lacking in vitamins and Doctor Atal's health could not stand the strain. He developed a vicious boil and chronic blood-poisoning set in. His colleagues advised him to return to India in the interests of his health and in March he started back on his trek to Yen-an on the way to Chungking and India. For over 18 months he had been an ideal companion and leader and both Basu and Kotnis acutely felt the gap he left behind.

But personal emotions—friendship, even love!—have to be set aside in the storm and stress of war. The hospitals where they worked were far from the firing lines. It took the wounded soldiers two or three days to reach there and, meanwhile, their wounds got infected and some even died on the way. The doctors were irresistibly reminded of the words of Doctor Bethune: "Doctors must not wait for the wounded to come, they must go to the wounded." The intrepid Canadian idealist had been responsible for organizing mobile medical units to go along with the fighting units and to render help not farther than two miles from the firing lines. Such units generally consisted of one doctor, one assistant, one dispenser and two nurses, and a mule to carry the equipment. The unit had to be constantly on the move and sometimes not more than five minutes notice was given to pack up and start.

At their special request, Kotnis and Basu were allowed to form such a mobile unit and (for considerations of their safety) they were attached to a crack regiment. For a month they worked literally *at the front*, constantly on the move with the regiment which was carrying on a series of surprise attacks on the enemy at diversified points. Now they could see the 8th Routh Army in action. The regiment, they noticed, was well-equipped with heavy machine guns and trench mortars—mostly captured from the enemy! The wounded were brought to them by peasant volunteer stretcher-bearers within a few minutes of the casualty and, after first aid, they were sent on to the field hospital unless a case happened to be very serious and the patient could not travel without risk to his life. Perfect co-operation between the people and the army facilitated everything and the peasants were ever willing to do whatever they were asked for—from bringing fruits for the wounded to building temporary hospitals!

After a month they were ordered to go to Wutai (Shansi-Chahar-Hopeh Border Region) to take the place of the late Doctor Bethune. They left in April and, having covered 1500 miles, reached the Hopeh-Chahar-Shansi Border Region only in September. To avoid the Japanese concentrations, they had to adopt a most tortuous, zig-zag route, wandering over the whole of North China, going as far north as (literally) the gates of Peking! It was in July when they passed the outskirts of the Immortal City and, from the top of a hill, they had a clear view. It was night time and the city looked lovely with all the lights burning brightly but the beautiful vision was spoilt by the thought that Peking was no longer the great centre of Chinese life, art and culture but only a garrison town of the marauding Japs.

It was by no means a pleasant sight-seeing tour. Dozens of times they had to cross the enemy communication lines (railways,

roads and rivers) and though they got used to the process, it was a risky business all the same. Often they passed, walking through fields of wheat and *kaoliang*, half a mile from a Japanese garrison, and night marches perforce were the rule rather than the exception. On one of these nocturnal tramps through the fields they were so near the enemy that when, to ward off sleep, Basu indiscreetly lighted a cigarette, it instantaneously brought a rifle shot from a Japanese sentry and the bullet whizzed just above their heads!

As, with their armed escort, they passed from village to village, they also inspected hospitals, gave directions for their improved working, treated civilians as well as soldiers. All over the vast countryside they saw sure signs of an awakening nation. Children doing sentry duty at the village gates, peasants formed in Self-defence Corps, "Little Teachers" teaching their elders how to read and write. As they entered a village, they saw a black-board by the way-side on which was chalked in big characters: "Communists and Kuomintang must co-operate." A boy told them that was the "lesson of the day" and no one—not even the Indian doctors—was allowed to pass by without learning it!

Also they saw the new womanhood of China in action, no longer the meek, dainty-footed creatures of old China but a brave new generation—women working in various departments of national activity under their organization, "Women's National Salvation Association," women carrying on the work of mass education, women working in fields, women taking military training to defend their honour and their homes, women who cook and look after their children in the daytime and join guerilla bands at night!

An interesting thing they noticed was the presence of a *charkha* in every home, just like in Indian villages. and women

spinning and weaving for the textile cooperatives that supply the cloth needs of the nation.

In every village Kotnis and Basu passed through, a public meeting was held to welcome them. At one place a gathering of 20,000 from all the surrounding villages turned up at the meeting that was held in a forest not more than five miles away from a Japanese garrison, so that while speeches were being delivered, men of the Self-Defence Corps had to keep guard on all sides. This meeting was remarkable because to it men and women came even from the occupied villages. From them the doctors learnt of the Japanese atrocities committed in the occupied area—the attacks on girls, the import and free sale of narcotics and heroin, the loot indulged in by the soldiers who entered a peasant's house and took away anything they fancied without the least compensation.

During this strange tour of North China, they saw many bands of guerillas in action. The favourite pastime seemed to be to remove the rails from the railway track built by the Japanese. This not only sabotaged the enemy communications but also supplied the much-needed metal to the Heavy Industry Cooperatives manufacturing rifles in improvised workshops not very different from the tribal rifle 'factories' of India's northwest frontier. Out of these rails were manufactured not only rifles but also hand grenades and even ploughshares.

They saw the Great Wall first near Peking and later, when their route led them across it, they found it almost in ruins. The wall, which is very broad and about forty feet high, runs for hundreds of miles over mountains and through vallies. It is built of big stones on the outside, with earth filled inside. This earth must be very fertile for they saw a crop of maize shooting up on the wall at many places where the peasants have been cultivating it!

The Great Wall, for centuries, has been the symbol of the solid foundations of ancient China, strong and impregnable. Built by the Chinese emperors as a protection against invading hordes, it did serve its purpose in its time. But history records that for the building of this tremendous wall, forced labour was employed and the pathetic tales of the poor peasants, dragged from their homes to build it, still can be heard in popular ballads and folk-songs. Some of these songs have been re-interpreted by the modern poets in the light of contemporary life, with references to the "great new wall of flesh and blood" that has been built by China's teeming millions to resist Japanese aggression. The old Great Wall is no longer sufficient protection against a modern aggressor, with his bombing planes, tanks and heavy artillery. But this new Great Wall—the unified, defiant people of China—that has been built not with forced labour of slaves and serfs but with the patriotic consciousness of free citizens, will prove far more effective in holding back the advance of the invader.

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Reaching a place near Laiyuan (in Chahar province) in September, Kotnis and Basu were asked to organise two separate mobile medical units to work with two different regiments.

The regiment to which Basu was attached was ordered to recapture the village of Dingtuanpo and had received secret information that only one Japanese company, without any artillery and armed only with machine guns, was garrisoning the town. Heavy casualties were expected and, therefore, Basu kept his medical unit ready about a mile behind the firing line. A force of 1500 attacked the Japanese garrison and all night, as the fighting progressed, the wounded were being brought back by stretcher-bearers. By the morning most of the enemy machine-gun nests

had been silenced and a radio message from the encircled garrison to the Japanese Headquarters was intercepted to the effect that their ammunition had been practically exhausted. In answer to the S. O. S., a plane was sent by the Japanese to drop ammunition by parachutes. The wind, however, was literally blowing against the Japs and the parachutes with their precious loads landed outside the town in open country and were immediately captured by the Chinese soldiers. The "wind-fall" yielded half a million cartridges, not to mention the costly silk of the twenty parachutes. In the ammunition boxes were also discovered thousands of dum-dum bullets which the Japanese have been using against the Chinese in flagrant violation of the internationally recognized laws of warfare. These vicious missiles, when they hit any part of the body, make mince-meat of the muscles, the pieces of shrapnel pierce into all parts of the body, so that any limb which is affected has to be amputated, while a dum-dum bullet in abdomen or chest invariably proves fatal.

The doomed garrison, finding no hope of getting further supplies of ammunition, put an end to itself in a characteristically Japanese manner. A Korean interpreter who was the sole survivor told the story, how 25 surviving men out of the original Company of 120 drank, sang Japanese Imperial songs, let loose an orgy of unrestricted violence in the village, raping women and killing men, burnt all their arms, put hand grenades in blankets rolled round their bodies and then jumped into the fire. Harakiri! The perverse, though impressive, code of self-destruction in the moment of defeat!

The attacking troops when they entered the town met a grim spectacle—burnt trucks, horses that had been shot dead, burning piles of ammunition, charred human bones! The villagers came

out of their huts and hiding places, weeks of agony writ large on their faces. Old men brought their young daughters—some were mere children!—for treatment and Doctor Basu was horrified to find what unspeakable atrocities had been committed upon these poor innocents by the gallant “heroes” of Nippon.

The news of the re-capture of Laiyuan sector was received with great jubilation in the surrounding countryside and peasants from the neighbouring villages came bearing gifts for the army of deliverance. There was rejoicing and happy re-union of friends. And thus, out of the sufferings and atrocities of Laiyuan, also rose the vision of a hopeful tomorrow when, one by one, all the villages and towns and cities will be snatched back from the vicious grip of the enemy.

Meanwhile, Doctor Kotnis who was with another regiment had a similar experience in another village which also was recaptured and the two Indians had much to tell each other when they returned to the Headquarters near Fuping, where a Base hospital and medical school had been established in memory of Doctor Bethune—the Bethune International Peace Hospital and Medical School. Kotnis, by virtue of his superior knowledge of the Chinese language, was asked to teach in this school while Basu was ordered back to Yenan.

The two friends parted after two years of happy comradeship. They promised to meet and return to India together. But little did they know that they would never meet again!

## PATTERN FOR DEMOCRACY

*Arise!*

*All you who don't want to be slaves,*

*Let's take our flesh and blood*

*And build a great new world.*

*Our most dangerous time has come!*

*Every citizen must shout, with his loudest voice,*

*Arise!*

*We are millions with a single heart*

*Ready to face the fire of the enemy guns!*

—CHINESE PATRIOTIC SONG.

BASU returned to Yen-an after a more than exciting 600-mile journey on foot which took two whole months and in the course of which his party (which included a large number of evacuees, women and children) was pursued by the Japanese for seven days. But the orders to the army escort were not to give fight as that would have unnecessarily endangered civilian lives. Sometimes as soon as they reached a village they were informed by the village scouts that the enemy patrols were in the vicinity and they had to pack up and be on the march within five minutes!

Once again, Basu was impressed by what he saw of the efforts being made by the Chinese to secure economic self-sufficiency in spite of war and the inroads made by the enemy. Small-scale industries had been started in the remotest villages to supply the simple necessities of the peasants. The serious shortage of medicines provided the acutest problem. Once it was possible to buy them in Japanese-occupied towns and then to smuggle them into the guerilla area. But the enemy had got wise to the stratagem and tightened their control of the medical stores. Since



then the Chinese had concentrated on developing their own resources. In one village, Basu saw a co-operative factory producing bandages, cotton, gauze and simple surgical instruments. The old Chinese pharmacopia was being revived and improved to meet the modern conditions and research workers were busy in improvised laboratories, reducing the active principles of efficacious Chinese remedies into pills, so that it should no longer be necessary to carry about huge jars of brews and sacks full of herbs. But still they were unable to manufacture antiseptics, disinfectants and anaesthetics.

In December, 1940, when he reached Yen-an, Doctor Basu was appointed Surgeon-in-Charge of the Ear, Nose, Throat and Eye department of the International Peace Hospital. It was the same establishment that they had started as the Model Hospital but now it had been moved nearer Yen-an, only five miles from the city. As before, it was housed in caves but some huts had also been erected for patients. In the Out-patients department, over a hundred cases were treated daily by Basu while about 30 beds were under his care in the hospital wards. There were no specialists there and so Basu had to specialize in everything himself.

The few Indian quack "eye specialists" practising in Shanghai and Canton, strangely enough, have created a general impression in China that Indian doctors are very proficient in treating ocular diseases. And as soon as the word got round, Basu started receiving a large number of cases for eye treatment. One typical case was that of a young peasant who had lost his eyesight following a shell-burst at the front. Pieces of shrapnel had got in the eye and damaged the ocular nerves. He was discharged from the army and sent to a Disabled Soldiers Co-operative. But there a second misfortune befell the poor man. His young

wife deserted him and, being terribly in love with her, the peasant spent many a love-sick moment. Then he heard of the "wise Indian doctor" and arrived at the International Peace Hospital to tell his tale of woe to Doctor "Ba Ssu Hua."

Basu made a careful examination of the peasant's eyes and found that while one was beyond repair, there was a slight chance of saving the other.

If he performed an Iredectomy operation by making a hole in the iris, piercing the cornea, the eye might regain sight. But if the operation proved a failure, all chances were gone for ever. He explained the difficult situation to the young man who implored the doctor to operate, whatever the consequences. But Basu had none of the special delicate instruments required for eye surgery and so he gave some designs to the local blacksmiths' co-operative workshop. They were more than willing to oblige but the instruments they could make were crude and unsuitable for such a delicate operation. One of Basu's resourceful Chinese colleagues suggested they should get instruments made of bamboo which could be sharpened to any extent required. It proved a capital idea but still they required a very small and sharp scissors for cutting the dead tissues of the cornea and the young peasant's chances of regaining his sight—and his wife!—depended entirely on this little thing. At last, when all seemed lost, Doctor Basu one day found just the kind of scissors he needed with a Chinese doctor—who was using it for trimming his moustaches. He fairly snatched it from the hand of his colleague, sterilized it and performed the operation which proved so successful that before it was finished, the young peasant shouted, "I can see. I can see!"

There is a happy end to this true story. The wife returned to the peasant. And the peasant returned to the army to fight for the freedom of his country!

But this is the human background of only one of at least 25,000 cases treated by the Indian doctors during their stay in China.

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From December 1940 to June 1943, Doctor Basu continued to work in Yen-an. Compared to the early adventures, this was a period of routine medical work—hospital duty, inspection of other clinics and dispensaries, and professional calls. During this time he treated not only many thousands of peasants and soldiers but also had such distinguished patients to care for as Mao Tse-Tung and Chu Teh.

In Yen-an at that time were men and women of many different nationalities—Koreans, Formosans, Malays, Javanese, Siamese and anti-Fascist Japanese. In co-operation with some of them, Doctor Basu founded the Anti-Fascist League of Oriental Nations, with General Chu Teh as Chairman, and 200 members. The purpose of the organization was to carry on anti-Fascist propaganda in different languages by radio, speeches, pamphlets and leaflets.

In due course, the work of the League grew to such proportions that the Border Region Government recognized it as one of the organizations entitled to send representatives to the Regional Parliament which is composed of representatives of all schools, colleges, political and literary associations, workers', peasants', merchants' and landlords' associations, besides the elected representatives from different constituencies. Even in the time of war when constant guerilla encounters are going on all the time and villages changing hands twice or thrice in a year, it is possible to hold general elections on the basis of adult suffrage. These people have blown-up the imperialist and ruling class theory that general elections cannot be held in war-time.

In all countries, there are all kinds of difficulties in the way of a foreigner wanting to acquire the right of citizenship. The United States of America still do not open their doors to anyone not belonging to the Caucasian race. Indians in South Africa are denied the right of franchise. But in war-time China a foreigner's identification with the Chinese national cause is sufficient to entitle him to become a citizen, even a member of the legislature. This was conclusively demonstrated when the Anti-Fascist League of Oriental Nations elected Doctor Basu to represent them in the Border Region Parliament. In this legislative body of Chinese citizens were admitted even two anti-Fascist Japanese representing the "Japanese Peasants' and Workers' School" established in the neighbourhood of Yen-an for the re-education of captured Japanese soldiers! All classes are represented in this Parliament—distinguished writers and intellectuals, old bearded peasants, fat landlords in silk gowns, army officers and soldiers, students, young girls and even old women with their bound feet! There were also Mongolians, Manchus, Tibetans and Muslims and representatives of other minorities. Politically, too, it is a 'United Front' body, both the Kuomintang and the Communists being represented, the latter being not more than one third of the total number. Here is the pattern of China's future democracy.

Elected in November 1941, Doctor Basu continued to be an active member of this Parliament to the day that he left China (he is still a member) and took part in its deliberations whenever a session was held in Yen-an. He was invited to report to the Parliament on the health and hygienic conditions of the Region and to make specific proposals to the Government for their improvement. There was a free discussion over every question brought up for debate and when Mao Tse-Tung addressed the

legislature on the opening day, he criticised his own Communist Party members for not being as watchful as they should have been to maintain the spirit of the United Front. The minorities, he declared, must be invited to collaborate in the democratic administration and no sectarianism should be allowed to disrupt the peoples' anti-Japanese front.

In June, 1943, Basu decided to return to India after five years of tireless work. Events were happening in his own country which he was unable to fully understand from the scanty and one-sided Reuter reports published in Chinese papers. He must go to India to resume contact with the reality of the Indian situation. He was sorry to part with his Chinese friends but, in their own interests, he wanted to go to India and (if possible) take back a second Medical Mission with fresh supplies of medicines and equipment.

A series of dinners and meetings were held to bid him farewell and he was deeply touched by the cordial sentiments expressed by his Chinese colleagues and friends at his parting. Particularly touching was the expression of gratitude by his patients, some of whom actually cried when they learnt he was going away, a young student who was being treated for some eye trouble imploring him with tear-filled eyes: "Please come back and cure my eyes—otherwise how shall I be able to fight for my country?"

But there was yet one more reason why Basu's heart was burdened with sorrow as he left Yen-an for Chungking to take the plane for India. He and Kotnis had once decided to go back to India together. But Kotnis was not going back with him. Kotnis would never go back to India. Kotnis was dead!

## .....AND ONE DID NOT COME BACK!

*Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose from the first?  
The earth to be spanned, connected by network,  
The races, neighbours, to marry and be given in marriage,  
The oceans to be crossed, the distant brought near,  
The lands to be welded together.*

—WALT WHITMAN.

LEFT alone at the Headquarters near Fuping, after the departure of Basu for Yen-an, Dwarkanath Kotnis applied himself to the work of organising and conducting the Bethune Memorial Base Hospital and Medical School. By now he could speak Chinese fluently and carried on the work as efficiently as any Chinese Doctor would have done in his place. He was progressively getting more and more attached to the country and the cause of his adoption. The live contact with the grim reality of China at war had turned the happy-go-lucky young adventurer into a conscious and determined anti-fascist and constant study of political and economic literature, augmented by personal talks and discussions, was shaping his ideology into the same mould as his Communist comrades of the Eighth Route Army.

It is not possible for the Japanese army of occupation in North China to garrison every village and hamlet but every year it carries on a "mopping-up" campaign to spread terror among the peasants in the countryside and to destroy the guerillas' "pockets of resistance." During such a period the Eighth Route Army headquarters—along with the Bethune Hospital and the Medical School—had to be kept constantly on the move, defeating the vastly superior mechanised strength of the enemy by the strategy of feints, of dodges, ambushes and night attacks. Within a month of Basu's departure, Kotnis was involved in these nerve-

racking operations which require nerves of steel to stand the strain of sleepless nights, forced marches, hunger and constant enemy fire. And yet he mentions it almost casually in a letter to Basu that he wrote on January 16, 1941 from Chin-Tsa-Chi Pienchu:—

“A month's interval after you left this place, the expected enemy's “*saw-dang*” (Mop-up campaign) came on. This time the enemy meant business. The highest military authority of North China personally directed over 20,000 troops. For about a month we marched, often dodging the enemy within his hearing. It was very interesting as well as instructive to see the school authorities themselves directing the movements. The students did the scouting, guarding, etc. We lost about 5 students to the enemy. As regards myself: as it was decided to graduate the first three batches of doctors soon (the graduation ceremony takes place tomorrow), their operative work had to be gone through hurriedly and like all others I had to be a little busy. Moreover I am looking after the surgical training of Dr. P'eng of *Phinghsi* (west of Peiping anti-Japan base), I did not have much spare time. However, in this small interval having joined in the active life of all around here, I am experiencing great transformation within myself.”

Meanwhile, something happened to him which was personal and emotional and yet somehow symbolic of the loyalty he had developed for the cause of free China. He fell in love with a Chinese girl.

Her name was Kuo Ching Lan. A smart, attractive, jolly girl, about five feet tall and with a round moon-like face, wearing

thick glasses, she was a teacher of Nursing at the Bethune Medical School of which Kotnis was the Principal. Originally belonging to a well-to-do family of Peiping, she had received her education at the Union Medical College. After the outbreak of the war, like thousands of others, she had been separated from her family and, after walking hundreds of miles to escape the invaders, had joined the Eighth Route Army.

Working as she was under Kotnis, it is not difficult to imagine how she felt drawn towards this brave young man from India who had sacrificed so much to serve her country. Admiration ripened into love, and to Kotnis it was one more link binding him to the soil of China. Kuo Ching Lan, unlike most Chinese girls, was not shy. She could speak English fluently and together they had many talks and discussions about India, about China, about the world, about themselves! In the midst of a ruthless war, when at any moment one might be killed by an enemy bomb or a bullet, love acquires an urgency that disregards the slow-moving processes of peace-time wooing and courtship, parental permission and sanction of conventional society. And yet Kotnis pondered a great deal before he asked for Kuo Ching Lan's hand in marriage. Was he being fair to her? Was he being fair to China? Or was he abusing the lavish hospitality and friendship accorded to him by the Chinese people? In old-time China there was a deep-rooted prejudice against foreigners. Chinese conventions did not encourage—indeed, frowned upon—inter-national alliances. Would his marriage run counter to such feelings and thus injure the cause of Indo-Chinese goodwill and unity? He was there not as an individual but as a representative of India and any step he took had to be considered objectively against this larger background.



Actually, when Kotnis spoke of his and Kuo Ching Lan's intention of getting married, no objection whatsoever was raised by his Chinese friends and colleagues. Even the old residents of near-by villages rejoiced to hear of it. War is a terrible thing but it also destroys many prejudices and barriers, forcing upon us the fundamental unity of the human family. And, in any case, Dwarkanath Kotnis, by his devoted service, had already endeared himself to the Chinese people who affectionately called him "Chunguo Haiza" (Son of China). Now the "Son of China" was becoming the "Son-in-law of China" and everyone was happy and pleased about it. Thus in an atmosphere of great cordiality and rejoicing, the marriage was celebrated and his Chinese friends did everything they could to compensate for the absence of the bridegroom's family and his Indian friends.

One gets a clear picture of the work he was doing as well as his mental development at this time from the letters he wrote to his friend, Basu. These letters took many months to reach their destination as they had to be sent with Comrades going back to Yen-an by various devious routes through the enemy-occupied territory. There was no certainty of their ever reaching Yen-an and, therefore, Kotnis had often to repeat the same things over and over again in every letter he could send. In a letter written on January 4, 1942, he talks of his work and gives Basu the news of his marriage :

"I will write you in short what I did here during the whole of the last year. After my officially joining the 8th R. A. (Eighth Route Army) last January I was asked to take charge of the International Peace Hospital—which was organized by adding one more "SO" (ward) to the already existing "SO" attached to Bethune Medical School. On the average there are

200 patients in the two "SO"s, together. By virtue of my being the head of the hospital I had to take part in the executive work, which in addition to my looking after the surgical beds keeps me pretty busy. My medical work consists of looking after the surgical patients doing the operative work and help students' practical study in operation theatre. We on the average do two operations a day, and consequently the transit of patients in the hospital is pretty great. During the whole year, we did about 430 surgical operations which included 45 amputations, 20 hernias, 35 lumbar and presacral parasympathectomies, 3 intestinal anatomies and a few gynaecological operations.

"This in short is the work I am doing here. Although on the scientific side of medicine one cannot make any progress here, I have made no small progress in my surgical technique.

"As regards my study, absence of English books on politics is a great handicap (I have received no book from Yen-an, nor can I find one here), especially during the first half of the last year. However, by now I have made a good deal of progress in Chinese characters and can read Chinese books like History of Chinese Revolution, etc. and newspapers, almost without the help of a dictionary. In the editorial of the newspapers (especially of Yen-an's Che Fang Rho Bao) one finds a great deal of interest for study, especially the analysis of the changing political situation. My great difficulty now is the paucity of time. My medical executive work takes a large part of my time. In short, my study of political theory is not upto my satisfaction.

"However, my great achievement during the last year is the marked change in my own character. You know very well politically how backward I was before reaching Yen-an, my brain full of bourgeois ideas, and though full of national sentiment, hazy ideas of revolutionary methods. During over one year's stay here, living the life of 8th. R. A. man, ever receiving criticisms from comrades both during meetings and in personal talks, I have myself been experiencing a good deal of transformation in my character, ideas, etc. I, therefore, consider 1941 as one of the most important ones in my life.

"Before discussing the point re: our returning to India, I might give you a piece of news. On 25th Nov. 1941 I got married to Com. Kuo Ching Lan—the girl with glasses on the teaching staff here. The decision was arrived at after great deliberations enough to give me headache, and curiously enough the one point which weighed heavily in favour of marriage was the Anti-Fascist Association of Eastern Nations, formed at Yen-an in which you took an active part and were even appointed a councillor of Border Region Govt.! From this I gathered that you are kept quite busy with political future. I too was not in a hurry to go back and also hold the same opinion as yours that we two ought to go back together and in future work as far as possible together. Although my marriage does not come in any way in the way of my going back to Yen-an or India, it is a point one has to give due consideration to....."

In June, 1942, Kotnis wrote to Basu a very long letter in which he said: "I have written to you not a few letters by now

and handed them over to Comrades going to Yen-an. But unfortunately, most of the Comrades have returned from half way as they could not cross the lines. I don't know, therefore, if you ever received any of my letters recently and so I am writing you in short an account of what I did since we separated."

In the course of this letter, after repeating a report of his activities, he says: "Recently the school has asked me to write a book on surgery for the doctor class. This again takes a large part of my time every day, for not only I have to write but I have also to get it translated in Chinese".

In case Basu did not receive his earlier letter, Kotnis repeated in this letter the news of his marriage:

"Another important change I underwent last year was that I got married. My wife is Com. Kuo Ching Lan, the teacher of nursing in our school. We got married last November and, damn it, by the time you get my letter, I will be having a baby!

"As regards my returning to Yen-an, I am now eager to go back. I am now waiting for two things—to complete my surgical book and the baby to come out. It will probably be by the end of this year or early next, I might leave for Yen-an. Of course, I don't know how much time it will take for me to reach Yen-an.

"I am glad to know from Chiang Bujang (who arrived here recently) that you are not going back to India immediately. I do hope you will wait for me, won't you please!

"Looking at the Indian conditions now, I am afraid we can't wait long in China. We will be required at the Indian front. Don't you think so?"

There is something infinitely pathetic about this letter. "I do hope you will wait for me, won't you please!" That is what Kotnis wrote. And Basu did wait for his comrade to return with him. But, alas, Kotnis did not come back. He would never come back!

The story of Kotnis' death is one of the purest tragedies of all times—and as such it is as ennobling and inspiring as it is heart-rending. He got married in November 1941. The baby—a bonny boy—came in July 1942. And on the 9th December, 1942, he died.

The strain of the "mopping-up" campaign had shattered Kotnis' health. For more than a year he had been having fits of epilepsy. And yet, sensitive and brave as he was, he never let anyone—not even his wife—know about them. Being a Doctor he could feel the fit coming in advance and quietly he would go out alone in the hills while it lasted, so that no one should worry on his account. The lack of rest and nourishing food, the constant strain, over-work, absence of proper medicines—all circumstances combined had completely undermined the defences of the youthful body. And the fell disease proved fatal.

Death came to Kotnis as he lay in a mud hut in an obscure corner of North China. He took with him the longing to return to his mother and his motherland and to serve India as he had served China.

As the clouds of eternal sleep gathered round him he cast a last look at the woman who had been his brave comrade and loving

wife, and the six-months old child in her arms—the tiny living symbol of Indo-Chinese Unity! He bade them farewell with a smile. Then the eyes closed—never to open again. But the smile remained. In death, as in life, Dwarkanath was fearless and brave.

Outside the hut, a crowd of Chinese officers and soldiers bowed their heads in silent grief. They were mourning a comrade.

Far away in India, a mother was to receive the news by cable. The one who had given him birth was now to suffer the pangs of his death.

A nation shared her grief. *Two* nations shared her grief. All the peoples of the world who believe in freedom and service of humanity shared her grief. Generations to come will cherish the memory of Dwarkanath Kotnis—the one who did not come back!

As Madame Sun Yat Sen has said in a message she sent to India:—

*“Doctor Kotnis’ memory belongs not only to our two great nations but also to the noble ranks of the indomitable fighters for freedom and progress of all mankind. The future will honour him even more than the present just because it was for the future he fought and died.”*

—END—

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